NEW YORK POST
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CAPITOL SWILL

Getty Images

Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz., left) had sexual relations with at least two staffers when he was in the House, The Post has learned. Gallego was part of a frat-like Democratic circle that included former Rep. Eric Swalwell (middle), who resigned after he was accused of sexual misconduct, and Rep. Jimmy Gomez (right), who admitted to one affair as he faces an ethics investigation.

PAGES 4-5

■ Revealed: Third member of Democrat ‘Animal House’ had sex with two aides

■ Buddy Eric Swalwell resigned, other pal Jimmy Gomez had affair, under investigation

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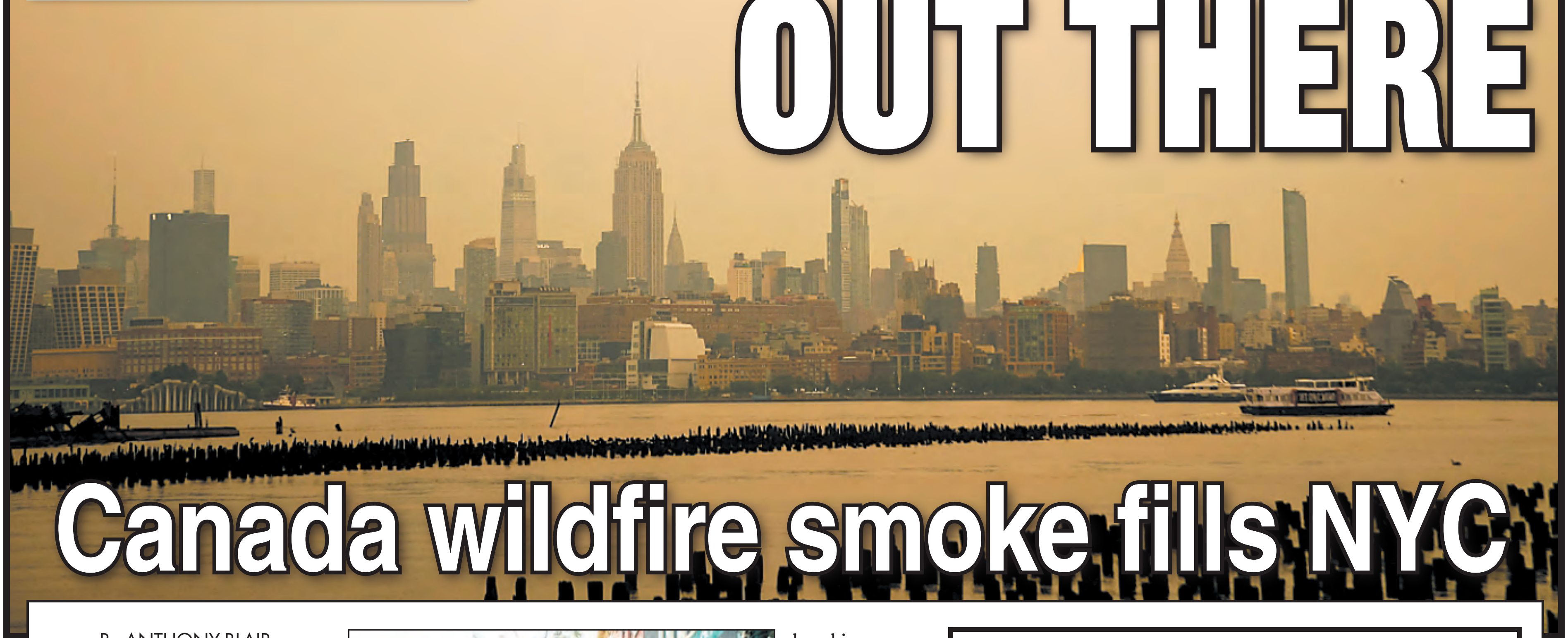
BEWARE THE AIR OUT THERE

USA TODAY Network via Reuters Connect

BREATHE UNEASY: Smoke from Canadian wildfires blotted out the sun and had NYC at a worse air quality than the world's most polluted cities Thursday. Some New Yorkers (bottom) wore protective masks.



Reuters

Canada wildfire smoke fills NYC

By ANTHONY BLAIR
and GEORGIA WORRELL

New York City endured worse air quality than Delhi on Thursday, as massive wildfires in Canada pushed hazy skies and dangerous smoke south.

The city's Air Quality Index (AQI) score soared to a "very unhealthy" level, which "may cause health issues for everyone, especially sensitive groups," according to the city's official emergency notification system.

It hit an index of 176 late afternoon, while Delhi, the city in India that typically tops annual pollution reports, recorded an AQI of 163, per IQAir.

By Thursday evening, the AQI jumped to Level Purple (between 201 and 300).

A statewide Air Quality Health Advisory was also issued by the New York state departments of Environmental Conservation and Health.

New York wasn't alone. Three major US cities ranked in the top four for most polluted air in the world Thursday. Detroit was the worst, with a score of 724 — well above the 301 threshold IQAir defines as "hazardous." Toronto ranked second at 271, which is in the "very unhealthy" range, while Minneapolis and Chicago followed at 257 and 250, respectively.

Robert Miller

'Take precautions'

Businesses and attractions shuttered across the Motor City after residents awoke to hazy skies and odors of burnt wood, the Detroit Free Press reported. Parts of Minnesota saw record-breaking smoke-concentration levels not experienced since 2014, according to The Minnesota Star Tribune.

By Wednesday afternoon, the AQI had reached 1,008 in Michigan's Upper Peninsula bordering Lake Superior, local meteorologist Brian Niznansky wrote on X.

Mayor Mamdani urged New Yorkers to limit their time outdoors as much as possible.

"Every New Yorker should take precautions. Limit your time outdoors, especially strenuous activity," he said, adding that free KN95 masks were available at hundreds of locations citywide — including libraries, police station houses and firehouses — with pickup locations listed at on.nyc.gov/freemask.

Gov. Hochul also weighed in, saying the state was coordinating with local counties to monitor conditions and distribute masks.

"I encourage all New Yorkers to stay informed about the latest updates and take the necessary precautions to protect yourselves, your neighbors and your loved ones," she said.

Compounding the crisis, a heatwave has pushed temperatures in the tri-state area near 100 degrees, while a heat dome is trapping wildfire smoke close to the ground, The New York Times reported. Air quality is expected to improve Friday morning before worsening again later in the day, ABC 7 reported.

More than 800 wildfires are still burning across Canada, including dozens out of control, according to the Canadian Wildland Fire Information System.

Cig-nificant risk

Taking a breath outside is like taking a puff.

Spending just three hours breathing the smoke-and-toxin-riddled Big Apple air on Thursday was equivalent to smoking 2.5 cigarettes, an expert warned.

New Yorkers are breathing "unhealthy" air thanks to the wildfire smoke funneling down from Canada and the Great Lakes — prompting officials to urge people to remain indoors.

"It's reasonable to say you're smoking 10 cigarettes today by breathing the air in New York City," Michael Petroni, a pollution expert, told The Post about spending a full day outside.

The five boroughs have been under an air quality advisory since Wednesday, with the Air Quality Index hovering in the 151-200 range — well above the 0-50 mark characterized as "good," according to state officials. *Katherine Donlevy*

D-umb S-tupid A-ctions

Zo crew: Nix 'prez'

By CARL CAMPANILE

They want to redistribute the presidency!

The Democratic Socialists of America are calling to scrap the executive branch, the Senate and Electoral College in a radical manifesto aiming to end "the two-party system."

The "Workers Deserve More" declaration would expand the House of Representatives, which would select the president and members of the Supreme Court — tearing up the Constitution and switching to a European-style parliamentary system.

"Replace the two-party system with a multiparty democracy," the newly published proclamation said.

"Expand the House of Representatives, implement proportional representation and ranked-choice voting in all elections, and abolish the Senate.

"Abolish the Electoral College. Replace the president and Supreme Court with an executive and judiciary chosen by and subordinate to Congress."

DSA drafters said an expanded House would be more democratic than the Senate, where each state has two senators regardless of population.

The lefty political group said the president has too much unilateral power in launching wars, and the conservative Supreme Court has expanded the executive's influence even more.

'End of the world'

Elsewhere, the DSA wants the government to establish public ownership of the largest corporations and essential industries to "ensure democratic control and accountability to the people."

It also calls for enacting "aggressive wealth taxes" on the richest individuals and corporations to fund public services and infrastructure.

"It's been said that it's easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism," the manifesto said.

Fett: I'd quit Dems for Israel

WASHINGTON — Sen. John Fetterman has revealed how the Democratic Party could lose him as a member.

The Pennsylvanian claimed that while he has "no plans" to abandon his party, his fellow Democrats fully turning against US support for Israel would mark a parting of the ways.

"If our party ever becomes — and just makes it official — the anti-Israel party, that's when I would leave, because that's been a moral clarity for me," Fetterman, 56, told the Hill Nation Summit on Wednesday.

"My long-term concern. . . is that our party is going to back away and turn their back to Israel."

The same day as Fetterman's remarks, 103 House Democrats backed an amendment by Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) to cut off $3.3 billion in defense support for Israel. *Ryan King*

'Flings' with House staffers

ROMPER RUBE'S IN HOT WATER

FAMILY 'SWAL'UES: Sen. Ruben Gallego (with his wife Sydney and two kids) has joined his pal, Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-Calif.), as rising Democrat stars accused of engaging in misconduct with women.

By STEVEN NELSON

WASHINGTON — Arizona Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego, a potential 2028 presidential candidate, engaged in sexual relationships with at least two House staffers, and his "very flirtatious" habits with others may come back to haunt him, The Post has learned.

The 46-year-old lawmaker admitted to the two relationships — both with aides to Texas Democrats — to one source, while a second person said they had recently learned of the romantic entanglements.

A third source confirmed one of the dalliances, both of which are said to have been consensual and occurred during Gallego's decade representing Phoenix in the House.

The relationships are part of a broader "pattern of mistakes and missteps and judgment calls," one source said, noting the imbalanced power dynamics of an elected official dating staffers. One of the women was in her 20s and is much younger than Gallego.

"What else could there be out there?" this person asked.

Last month, the Senate Ethics Committee dismissed a complaint brought against Gallego by Rep. Anna Paulina Luna (R-Fla.) that alleged campaign finance violations and sexual misconduct against the Democrat, who was elected to the Senate in 2024.

Gallego's non-denial

The ethics panel, chaired by Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), "didn't ask" about Gallego's relationships with the staffers — likely because it was unaware — and instead "focused squarely on what Luna presented to them," an insider said this week.

"Ethics looked in the wrong place," this person summed up the congressional probe.

Gallego's office and the two House staffers did not respond to The Post's requests for comment.

Minutes after this article was published online, the senator gave a non-denial to an NBC News journalist on Capitol Hill, uttering, "I'm not going to engage in gossip."

When asked if The Post's reporting was accurate, Gallego again said, "I'm not going to engage in gossip."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) sputtered, "I'm not — I'm focused on this right now" when asked by Fox News about Gallego's conduct.

Sources said it's believed both relationships occurred while Gallego was unmarried.

Rumors have swirled about Gallego's personal life following the April resignation of his best friend in Congress, Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-Calif.), amid claims by multiple women that Swalwell sexually harassed or assaulted them. Gallego has denied knowledge of Swalwell's alleged misconduct.

Luna claimed in a CBS News interview April 16 that a woman was preparing to speak out about an "incident" involving Gallego and Swalwell (pictured together, below) "at the same time, and the event was sexual in nature, allegedly."

On April 23, Luna claimed on social media that "I have now heard of 4 women who have had multiple and uncomfortable/inappropriate advances/comments/touching, etc. from Senator Gallego."

'Time to resign'

Gallego responded to the Ethics Committee's dismissal of Luna's complaint by calling the allegations "right-wing conspiracies peddled by far-right activists like Anna Paulina Luna, the White House and their allies" and demanding an apology.

"The good news about DC is everyone talks, and eventually the reporters come forward with your texts," Luna responded in an X post. "Do yourself a favor and keep raising for your legal defense fund. Once a creep always a creep, and you're gonna need it."

Gallego married his current wife, Sydney, in

may spell doom for Dem

Facebook/Ruben Gallego

June 2021 — three years after they met at the June 2018 Congressional Baseball Game. They were engaged in February 2020.

He filed for divorce from his first wife, Kate, 10 days before Christmas in 2016, when she was nine months pregnant. The divorce was granted in April 2017.

Luna responded to The Post's report on X: "Time to resign. Glad people are going on record about this creep."

"This scumbag doesn't deserve the privilege of representing the people of Arizona," wrote Rep. Abe Hamadeh (R-Ariz.). "Ruben Gallego should follow his buddy Swalwell's lead and resign."

Former Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) added: "Congress needs to step up, do the right thing, and force expulsion."

"Stop protecting politicians. Start protecting people," wrote Rep. Kat Cammack (R-Fla.).

Relationships between lawmakers and their own staff members were banned in 2018, and there's a post-Swalwell push underway to ban relations with all congressional staff.

Sexual encounters between elected representatives and staff from other offices generally are not banned by congressional ethics rules. Other conduct such as sexual harassment is not allowed.

But internal investigations can turn up additional damaging information.

"If the Ethics Committee comes back and says, 'We are opening an investigation,' question one [for Gallego] is: 'Did you ever have relationships with any staff member during your time in Congress?' " a source said.

"I wouldn't be surprised if there are more that he has to list, and he can't lie about that because, you know, it's a sworn [statement]."

'Always steered clear'

A Democratic operative who has interacted with Gallego said she found news of the staffer relationships "not surprising."

"I have witnessed firsthand his very flirtatious nature after a couple of drinks," she said. "Maybe he thinks he's being charming? I don't know. Guy gives me the creeps. I've always steered clear."

There's a long, bipartisan tradition of members of Congress having personal baggage. "Pro-life" Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.) has been re-elected repeatedly despite the revelations in 2023 that he had urged abortions for both his ex-wife and mistress.

Many members of Congress resign in the face of sexual scandals, however, including former Rep. Katie Hill (D-Calif.), who stepped down in 2019 due to a relationship with a campaign aide.

Earlier this year, Rep. Tony Gonzales (R-Texas) resigned over an affair with a district staffer who killed herself.

In addition to the senator's personal life, Gallego faces another headache in the form of a Justice Department investigation into his alleged misuse of campaign funds to attend the Super Bowl in 2023 as well as to take vacations to St. Barts, Disney World and Disneyland. Gallego said the Trump DOJ was "targeting" him for political reasons.

snelson@nypost.com

A sleazy act to 'Swal'low

Eric just first to fall

By STEVEN NELSON

WASHINGTON — The party's over now.

Sen. Ruben Gallego's presidential plans are in tatters after the revelation that he had sexual relations with at least two House aides — as he joins fellow congressional bros whose pursuit of much younger staffers was revealed.

Gallego was part of the frat culture of Rep. Eric Swalwell (resigned) and Rep. Jimmy Gomez (under investigation), who treated the House as a party.

Three months ago, the charismatic trio — known as the "Cool Kids Clique" — were widely seen as the future of the Democratic Party.

Swalwell was leading polls in the California governor's race, while Gallego was poised to be a serious contender to replace President Trump in the Oval Office.

Their close pal Gomez had founded the Dads Caucus and scored spots on two powerful House committees.

Then came Friday, April 10.

'Other allegations'

As the Artemis II mission splashed down in the Pacific, the San Francisco Chronicle and CNN dropped stories that sent the Nancy Pelosi protégé plummeting.

The Chronicle reported that a woman who worked for Swalwell accused him of twice sexually assaulting her while she was too intoxicated to consent. CNN cited three other women who said Swalwell made unwanted advances, including sending explicit messages.

He suspended his gubernatorial campaign two days later and resigned from Congress on April 14, though he denies the allegations.

Gomez and Gallego scrambled to distance themselves, but they quickly became the focus of scrutiny and dishing by fellow Democrats repulsed by their behavior.

NEW YORK POST
METRO EDITION
SUNDAY
ANIMAL HOUSE
Swalwell's Congress pals joined in his 'Dem-bauchery'

CALIFORNIA POST
Page Six Hollywood
LATE EDITION
Swalwell pal Rep. Gomez admits to affair, sex probe
WITH FRIENDS LIKE SLEAZE

On April 18, two Democrats who had attended a backyard bash at Swalwell's DC home in the summer of 2023 revealed to The Post that Gomez was spotted making out with a much younger aide to Swalwell against a car outside.

A Gomez spokesperson insisted the story was "not true" and the encounter "didn't happen" — but Gomez confessed on June 2 to CNN that he had committed "personal mistakes outside my marriage."

The news outlet reported that a House Ethics Committee investigation had turned up "other allegations of sexual misconduct against Gomez that it is now investigating."

Gallego, confronted by reporters on Capitol Hill Thursday, did not deny the relationships with House staffers — as one Democratic source said it was time to take him "off 2028 consideration lists."

snelson@nypost.com

Zo's in-tents inaction

By KHRISTINA NARIZHNAYA,
HALEY BROWN
and JORGE FITZ-GIBBON

KICKING THE CAN DOWN 11TH AVENUE: Mayor Mamdani said the many West Side homeless encampments "will be cleared" but not until all of the appropriate outreach has been exhausted.

Lone Pine Press for NY Post

Will clear camps . . . eventually

Mayor Mamdani said Thursday he'll finally do something about the embarrassing homeless encampment that has marred Manhattan's West Side — but doesn't have a clue when.

Mamdani told reporters Thursday he has "noticed" the blocks-long blight between the Intrepid Museum and the Jacob Javits Center but refused to give a timeline and said he had no idea when his own mandated seven-day waiting period to act kicks in.

"This site has been noticed, and it will be cleared," the mayor said. "As with any site, once we notice there is seven days until the point of clearing each of those seven days is characterized by outreach from city workers looking to connect those who are present with services whether it be services at a shelter, medical services or supportive services beyond that."

Day 7 is anyone's guess

Under his own mandate, the NYPD had to cede enforcement of unsightly encampments to city outreach and homeless services workers, who have one week to offer vagrants services and a place to bed down before the makeshift shelters and tents can be taken down.

The Post asked Mamdani on Thursday when that seven-day period ends.

"We can get back to you," he said. "I don't know which is the seventh day."

The encampment has proven to be a black eye for City Hall, turning the area into skid row.

The encampment is made up of blocks of ratty makeshift shelters and worn-out tents, including some where drugs and sex are peddled while tapping into city utility poles to steal electricity.

On Thursday, most of the vagrants remained, with some packing up their possessions, taking down tents and moving on — until nightfall, when many were likely to return.

Most of the sketchy sidewalk squatters refused to comment.

Two people emerged from one shelter on 47th Street and West Side Highway, and three from another at 50th Street and 11th Avenue.

One camp sits across from the Javits Center, with a tent, a structure covered with a tarp and belongings strewn about, including a fridge, a massage table and a vacuum.

There are three encampments at 44th Street between 11th and 12th avenues, and two on 36th Street between Hudson Boulevard and 11th Avenue, where a mask-wearing man tended to a collection of items, including shelves, canned foods and a car hub cap.

City Hall 'scrambling'

City Hall sources said the mayor was "freaking out" over the mess and "scrambling" to deal with it, but that process seems to be taking as long as it did for him to address the problem in the first place.

City workers showed up for the first time on Wednesday but did little other than clean up some trash.

One of the illegal sidewalk campers told The Post Wednesday that most of the folks shacking up in the encampment just want to be left alone — and picked the lightly traveled stretch to stay out of sight.

"This is actually a place where we get away from the spotlight where everybody is looking at us all the time . . . like being in the shadows," the 42-year-old vagrant said. "That's all this place is for."

REP. MIKE LAWLER
GOPer running for re-elex.

Lawler owns up to 2012 DWI rap

Upstate US Rep. Mike Lawler has revealed that in 2012 he was arrested on a drunken-driving charge.

The 39-year-old Hudson Valley pol, one of the most vulnerable House Republicans in the upcoming midterms, disclosed he had been charged with DWI after drinking on St. Patrick's Day in the Big Apple.

"I was deeply disappointed in myself, but moreover disappointed that I let my dad down," Lawler told News 12 in an interview Wednesday, noting his father was a recovering alcoholic battling cancer.

The congressman had previously revealed the incident to a group of students at Nanuet HS during a distracted-driving presentation last month.

"It was not my proudest moment. It was something I was deeply embarrassed about," he told the students.

"More importantly, I could've killed myself or someone else. I was grateful that I was pulled over and nobody was hurt," he added.

He was charged with DWI but later pleaded to a misdemeanor of driving while ability impaired. *Vaughn Golden*

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- Pick-10 Thu.: **1, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 27, 28, 31, 35, 39, 44, 45, 47, 52, 54, 73, 77, 79**
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Stole data of 220M Americans: Trump

BEIJING'S U.S. VOTER HACKING

RED-HANDED: President Trump says Thursday China's theft of US voter registration "presents an unprecedented election security nightmare."

Getty Images

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
and VICTOR NAVA

President Trump revealed that China stole the voter registration data of 220 million Americans as part of his prime-time speech Thursday.

"Over a period of years, starting during the 2020 election cycle, the People's Republic of China carried out what is believed to be the largest compromise of election data in history, resulting in China's illicit acquisition of 220 million U.S. voter files," Trump said in remarks from the East Room of the White House.

"That information includes names, addresses, phone numbers, political party preferences, and other sensitive data that would be needed to register to vote and engage in other nefarious activities, which is exactly what was happening," the president continued. "This data loss presents an unprecedented election security nightmare.

"The intelligence even shows that China assigned a data exploitation unit specifically to this new project."

Don kept in dark

Some government officials reportedly knew China stole at least some voter registration data as early as 2020, but didn't tell the president about it before the election that year, according to the president.

"Members of the deep state — a very, very famous group of people — in many cases in our intelligence agencies, worked to actively suppress and downplay information about the extent of China's sinister election meddling, covering it up from both the president and the American people like nobody thought was possible," Trump said.

There have been multiple reports of Beijing accessing US voter registration data, and an intelligence report declassified in 2022 found that "Chinese officials analyzed multiple US states' election voter registration data," but the number of affected Americans has never before been reported.

Trump further revealed the Chinese government's strategy against the United States dating back to mid-2019, which he said "was focused on undermining domestic confidence in the US president."

"They wanted to just make you sound like your president wasn't so hot, when actually your president has done a great job," he said. "And they did everything possible to do exactly that."

The president also highlighted "raw intelligence" obtained by the FBI in 2020 that detailed China's "attempt to manufacture illegal ballots for Joe Biden."

Trump claimed the Chinese election interference plots were "buried by rogue bureaucrats" and, during his first term, kept out of his daily presidential briefings.

"One email among intelligence analysts admitted that they had 'deliberately massaged the presidential daily briefing to withhold information regarding Chinese activities related to the election,' " Trump said. "Another official inside the FBI wrote that she was running 'a shadow government' to keep intelligence about China's election meddling from becoming known."

Trump said administration officials discovered some of the material in "burn bags" that were supposed to be destroyed.

"[T]he findings are stunning," Trump marveled, before announcing that he was directing the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the CIA to "investigate how and why such crucial information was hidden, to fire those involved in the coverup, and to file criminal charges if appropriate against these people."

End 'complacency'

Sen. Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio) earlier confirmed Thursday that Trump's speech would have to do with election security and China in a post to X.

"I was just briefed by the White House on what to expect this evening. I would encourage every American to tune in tonight to the President's speech," he said. "This may be the most important Oval Office address since the Cuban Missile Crisis. The time for complacency with China is over."

The president has long alleged that widespread voting fraud cost him the 2020 election.

However, evidence has yet to be presented suggesting fraud was committed on the scale necessary to deny Trump a second consecutive term.

Trump has railed against mail-in ballots, "inaccurate" voting machines and delays in the vote-counting process since his 2020 loss to Biden.

The president has signed multiple election integrity-focused executive orders in his second term aimed at pressuring states into providing better security for their elections and tightening absentee-ballot rules.

Trump's speech comes as the Save America Act, an election security bill he has demanded lawmakers prioritize, languishes in a legislative logjam on Capitol Hill.

The Trump-backed bill would require proof of US citizenship (such as a passport or birth certificate) to register to vote in federal elections, among other election reforms.

Efforts to ram it through the Senate have consistently failed due to a Democratic filibuster and reservations from some Republicans.

The prime-time speech was Trump's third address to the nation in his second term.

Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, ripped the president for using the platform to relitigate the results of the 2020 election.

THE RED APPLE

Council OKs raises for city pols

By HANNAH FIERICK, CRAIG McCARTHY and MATT TROUTMAN

They raised a stink.

City Council members overwhelmingly voted Thursday to give themselves an 18% raise — a self-serving move that comes after months of thwarted attempts to pass a pay hike.

A veto-proof 42-6 vote approved the measure to inflate council salaries to $175,500, as well as hike Mayor Mamdani's pay to $305,800 a year, backdated to January — the start of new terms in office and the first day on the job for some lawmakers.

The nay votes all came from Republicans and conservative Democrats, including Councilman Phil Wong (D-Queens), who said he pushed for savings in the city's forever-bloated budget.

"In my district, there are so, so many constituents that are living paycheck to paycheck and having problems making ends meet," he said.

"So, I cannot vote onto a bill to increase salaries for myself."

The raises come not only after lawmakers approved a record-breaking $126 billion city budget, but also a bid to sneakily pass a smaller 16% hike as 2025 closed.

The end-of-year pay ploy ultimately failed, leading the effort's champion Councilwoman Nantasha Williams (D-Queens) to try again.

Council Speaker Julie Menin, a millionaire, was the sole abstention in the final vote. She said she won't accept the raise.

Mamdani said Thursday during an unrelated event that he'd prefer his raise go into the "pockets of those who are struggling in this city."

"I will not accept a pay raise," he said.

"I haven't knocked on anyone's door in New York City and they said their concern is that the mayor makes too little. So, that's not my concern either."

Additional reporting by Haley Brown

And $10K hikes for teacher aides

The city's teaching assistants will get $10,000 pay bumps after a City Council vote Thursday that bypassed the collective bargaining process — and could face a potential veto from Mayor Mamdani.

The unanimous Council vote fulfilled a long-sought goal by the powerful United Federation of Teachers union to raise paraprofessionals' pay.

But the approval also came over the objections of many government insiders and watchdogs with the Citizen Budget Commission, who warned the combined $324 million giveaway could set a dangerous — and ultimately even more costly — precedent.

Mamdani, who supported legislation to hike paraprofessional pay as a mayoral candidate, likewise argued government employees' pay hikes should be negotiated rather than decided on the whims of lawmakers.

Hannah Fierick

MEDICAID

Pols' heads in the sand

Costly denial of crisis

KEN GIRARDIN

NEW York's gubernatorial election is less than 16 weeks away, but both Gov. Hochul and her GOP challenger Bruce Blakeman have largely escaped questions about one of the most substantial tasks New York's governor will face next year: how he or she will balance the budget.

Because with outlays soaring on the state's priciest programs — Medicaid and school aid — the state is in dangerous territory.

The spending plan approved in late May, nearly two months after the official deadline, continued Albany's multi-year practice of hiking expenditures substantially faster than inflation.

Even as the economy, and tax receipts, have grown faster than expected, Albany has been spending money as fast as it comes in.

State officials already estimate a $6 billion mismatch between revenues and expenses in the fiscal year that will begin April 1.

That's far from the biggest budget gap a governor has had to confront, but it's notable how little people are talking about it — or about the overall shakiness of the state's financial picture.

State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli this week warned "[i]ncreased spending pressure continues to strain the State's ability to find structural budget balance and puts into question the State's future ability to make important investments."

Zo disregards warnings

Hochul early in her tenure squeezed lawmakers into putting aside cash in the state's reserves to help weather the next emergency or economic downturn. But those funds are smaller as a share of the state budget than they were two years ago, and they are poised to keep shrinking.

Unfortunately, DiNapoli's reports don't appear on many summer reading lists: His office had also sounded the alarm about New York City's slipshod finances last summer.

Mayor Mamdani ignored him and then was shocked — shocked! — to learn the city had been spending more than it took in for three years.

But these warnings should be heeded.

About half of state tax receipts are flowing to just two programs: Medicaid, the joint state-federal healthcare program meant to serve the poor and disabled, and aid payments to New York's costliest-in-the-nation schools.

State taxpayers are paying over $48 billion for Medicaid this year, up from $28 billion just five years ago.

People often attribute this to fraud, but most of Medicaid's cost explosion was lawful. New York's political class made a conscious choice to make more people eligible for more services and to pay providers more for them.

Medicaid's structure, which matches every dollar from Albany with at least a dollar from federal taxpayers, created a dreadful incentive to allow, and even encourage, bloat.

Ironically, the politicians bemoaning "waste, fraud and abuse" the loudest are often the least interested in the nitty-gritty details about how to actually spend public dollars more wisely.

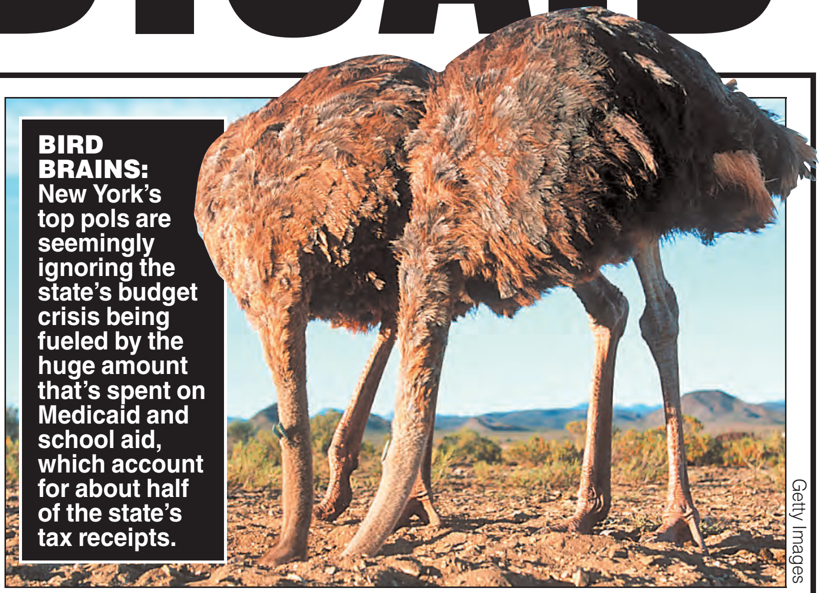
New York's school districts, meanwhile, once again escaped meaningful scrutiny from Albany this year as senators and assemblymembers of both parties refused to ask basic questions like why New York spends 30% more per student than Massachusetts but falls short in every measurement of student outcomes.

Will New Yorkers hear that question asked some time in the fall? Unlikely.

A good swath of Democrats in the Senate and Assembly is worried he or she will lose their next primary to socialist challengers, and most Republicans are terrified of offending the public employee or healthcare unions invested in the status quo.

Forget the Eastern Bluebird. New York's state bird should be the ostrich.

Ken Girardin is a fellow at the Manhattan Institute.



BIRD BRAINS: New York's top pols are seemingly ignoring the state's budget crisis being fueled by the huge amount that's spent on Medicaid and school aid, which account for about half of the state's tax receipts.

Getty Images

OUTLAY $HOCK

Hochul health spending now tops education

By CARL CAMPANILE

New York's spending is multiplying — but maybe not adding up.

The state is now spending more on its massive Medicaid program than it does on K-12 schools — as it already pays more per person than anywhere else in the country, a shocking new analysis shows.

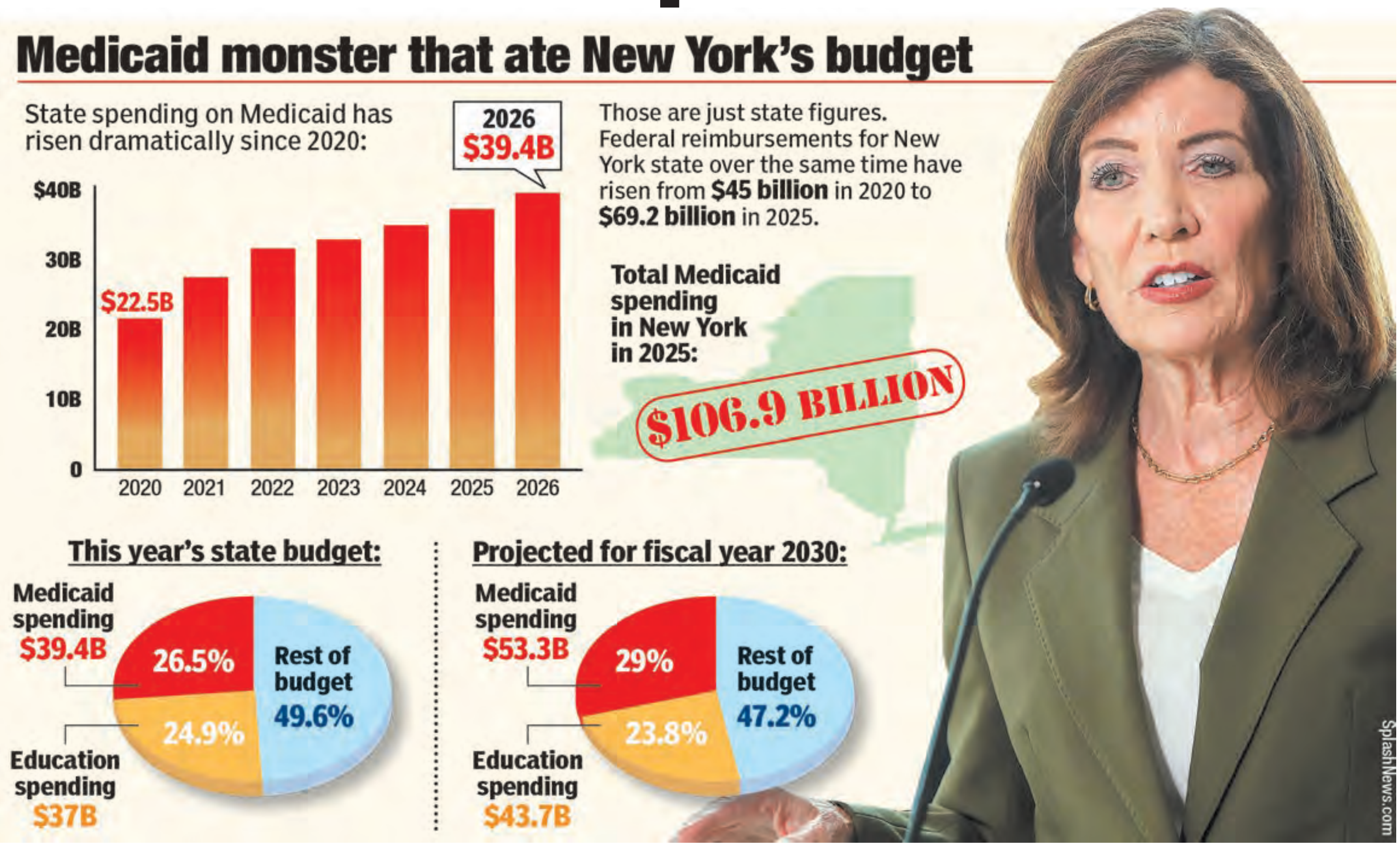
New York taxpayers paid an eye-watering $39.4 billion for the Medicaid program in the 2025-26 fiscal year — 26.5% of the entire state budget — and more than the $37 billion it dished out for education, according to a new report from state Comptroller Tom DiNapoli.

The soaring spending comes as the federal government probes Gov. Hochul's administration and its Medicaid program for possible waste, fraud and abuse.

"When Medicaid outranks math, the state's fiscal diagnosis isn't complicated," Dr. Mehmet Oz, administrator of the US Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, told The Post. "Every tough decision New York makes to clean up Medicaid ensures that education is not crowded out."

The Trump administration most recently set its sights on numerous adult care centers for seniors located in New York City over possible fraud.

Medicaid is the national health-insurance program for the needy, with costs shared by the federal, state and local governments.



More than doubled

New York already spends more per resident on Medicaid than any state in the US — and it pays more on education per student than anywhere else.

State spending on Medicaid has more than doubled over the last decade.

"In recent years, all [state] agency Medicaid spending has overtaken spending on School Aid," DiNapoli's report said, analyzing the effects of the state's record-high $269 billion budget for 2026-27.

Combined spending on Medicaid and education accounts for more than half the current state budget.

DiNapoli's analysis, citing Hochul's Budget Division projections, said state Medicaid will soar in three years to $53.3 billion — 29% of state spending in three years — while school-aid spending will jump to $43.7 billion, or 23.8% — a nearly $10 billion gap.

"Spending on Medicaid is too high. It's a free-for-all. There's no accountability. They don't care about the results," said Bill Hammond, a fellow with the Empire Center for Public Policy who monitors New York state's health-care policy.

Every sector of the influential health-care industry receives Medicaid dollars — hospitals, nursing homes, medical clinics, drug manufacturers and home-care services, Hammond said.

"It's not about serving the public interest. It's about serving special interests," he said.

He said the foundation of the Medicaid program provides worthy services to needy patients including people with disabilities.

But in many cases New York overspends and wastes money, he said.

Adult care centers for elderly residents have proliferated and costs have skyrocketed, with prosecutors bringing cases against operators offering bribes for enrollment, he added.

Albany's generosity also comes at a hefty cost, with Hammond saying a majority of Medicaid recipients in New York have incomes above the poverty level.

DiNapoli said Medicaid spending is projected to increase by $5 billion to help medical facilities handle an influx of patients showing up in emergency rooms because federal cutbacks knocked them off the health-insurance rolls.

Enrollment to soar

Medicaid enrollment is projected to jump to 7.2 million, from 6.6 million, as noncitizens get booted off another state-run health insurance called the Essential Plan.

Hochul's budget office reports Medicaid-spending increases are driven by minimum-wage hikes for health-care workers, rising medical and drug costs, higher reimbursement rates for hospitals and nursing homes, and continued growth in aging and other "high-utilization populations," the analysis noted.

But DiNapoli also pointed out the number of New York hospitals identified as "financially distressed" and eligible for emergency subsidies has also skyrocketed.

700% hike in fed aid

Some 75 of the state's 261 hospitals, or 28.7%, were labeled financially distressed — a 200% jump from a decade ago. The surge in financially faltering hospitals triggered a 700% increase in federal and state aid to those facilities.

The just-enacted state budget includes a $500 million in "one-time" assistance to distressed hospitals.

The increased Medicaid spending above the state spending cap coupled with a drop in health-related tax revenues will "require the State to make choices about the sustainability of the current trajectory of Medicaid spending," the comptroller's analysis said.

Mayor watches World Cup at Rikers

Zo's prison goals

AP

By NATALIE O'NEILL

Mayor Mamdani caught a red card online for his latest publicity stunt — casually catching the England-Argentina World Cup game Wednesday (above) surrounded by alleged felons and convicts at Rikers Island.

Hizzoner shared photos of himself Thursday slumming it with the jailbirds on his official X account, waxing poetic about how "football belongs to everyone."

"Yesterday, I joined New Yorkers on Rikers Island to watch England take on Argentina. We experienced one of the tournament's biggest moments side by side," he said. "Joy and connection should not be scarce resources. Every New Yorker deserves to have their dignity affirmed."

The Associated Press was the only media outlet invited to the photo op, which showed the perpetually smiling socialist shaking hands with inmates, chatting with them around the table like old pals and enjoying the beautiful game.

Rikers — the sprawling Queens jail complex that Mamdani has vowed to shutter completely — houses pretrial inmates and convicts who are serving sentences of a year or less.

One prisoner told the democratic socialist mayor he expected Argentina to beat England and go on to play Spain — which is exactly how the game played out.

"You never know," said Mamdani — a fan of the underdog team Morocco, which lost to France last week.

'What about victims?'

More than 100 inmates, dressed in tan prison jumpsuits, were rewarded with the watch party, along with a buffet of salmon, penne alla vodka and chicken parmesan.

Inmates took seats at tables and cheered in front of a large projection screen set up in a gym — one of 90 such jailhouse viewings since the tournament kicked off last month.

"Programs like this equal safety in our jail," said Stanley Richards, the city's correction commissioner and a former Rikers inmate. "What we say to them is that your humanity is seen, heard and valued."

But not everyone shared warm and fuzzy feelings over Mamdani's Rikers jaunt.

"You are absolutely insane. Hanging with convicted felons. What about the victims of their crimes? I'm sure they loved seeing you share your 'joy' with them. You are pathetic" one critic ripped on X.

Another person snarked, "You putting criminals, illegal aliens and leeches on the public dole above hardworking taxpayers. See how that works out for you."

With Post Wires

Mamdani raises $300K+ for 2029

Mayor Mamdani has already raised a whopping $304,000 for his 2029 reelection campaign — with 61% of those donations originating from out of state.

The numbers released in the Campaign Finance Board filings show candidates' fund-raising over the past six months, with individual contributions to Mamdani's campaign in the last month averaging $52.

Mamdani's campaign manager Celia Castellan told City & State Mamdani does not plan to participate in the board's matching-funds program — which matches donations under $2,500 8-to-1 with public funds.

His 6,000 donors, averaging $45, she said, proves his candidacy is "bigger than politics as usual. It's a movement."

Mamdani broke records in 2025 when he amassed hundreds of thousands in individual contributions for his 2025 campaign.

That led him to max out his fund-raising at $8.1 million with matching funds by March 2025, three months before the Democratic primary.

Filings show Mamdani now has about $100,000 on hand after shelling out $204,000 on campaign staff and consultants in the first filing period.*Hannah Fierick*

Hizzoner targets landlords to cover tenant $creens

LET IT RIP: Mayor Mamdani's Rental Ripoff Report was unveiled Thursday with a masked tenant activist.

Mayor Mamdani is backing a proposal that would force New York City landlords to pick up the tab for tenant credit checks.

The recommendation, outlined in his administration's new Rental Ripoff Report, would bar owners from charging applicants for credit reports and instead require landlords or their brokers to pay any screening costs.

"This can be an insurmountable barrier for rent-burdened tenants — defined as those paying at least 30% of their income toward rent — and especially those exiting shelter or receiving rental assistance," the report said.

The report was unveiled at a press conference where a masked tenant activist called evictions "violence."

Mamdani's plan is to have DCWP work with the City Council on new legislation that would stipulate landlords could require either a credit check — paid for by the landlord or broker — or proof that an applicant's income meets the common 40-times-the-rent standard, but not both.

The 68-page report laid out an ambitious slate of tenant-focused proposals, including legally recognizing tenant unions, directing HPD to investigate every heat complaint citywide and requiring landlords to disclose any AI-generated or digitally altered images and videos in rental listings so applicants are not misled by doctored apartments.

The report's ideas came from "Rental Ripoff Hearings" where 2,300 tenants across the five boroughs detailed housing conditions, fees and landlord practices they wanted City Hall to change.

Mamdani signaled his team is already working to line up legislative support for the ideas in the report.

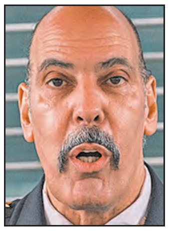
"We are speaking to our partners, whether it be those who serve in the City Council or beyond that, about the importance of . . . ensuring that we are finally bringing the kinds of tenant protections that this city should have brought years ago," Mamdani told reporters Thursday at a press conference about the report.

Haley Brown

Fed raid on former NYC sheriff

Federal agents raided the New York and Puerto Rico homes of ex-NYC sheriff Anthony Miranda, The Post has learned.

The search warrants from the Brooklyn US Attorney's Office followed a 2024 probe by the city Department of Investigation at the sheriff's headquarters that delved into alleged misappropriation of cash seized from illegal pot shops, law enforcement sources said.


MIRANDA

The probe also delved into accusations that Miranda tried to get his wife — who worked for a company tasked with destroying seized marijuana and also as a consultant with the pot industry's competitor Big Tobacco — a job with the city, according to sources.

The city also investigated accusations that Miranda sought donations to a nonprofit in exchange for turning a blind eye to certain enforcement issues, though he was not charged with any wrongdoing.

The DOI handed off the case to prosecutors in the Eastern District of New York, where a grand jury recently took actions that culminated in the search warrants, the sources said. Details about the apparent federal probe remained murky Thursday as agents removed items from Miranda's homes.

Miranda didn't return a request for comment, nor did officials with the Eastern District of New York. FBI and DOI representatives declined to comment.

Joe Marino, Craig McCarthy and Matt Troutman

'Portnoy for mayor' boa$t

Barstool Sports founder Dave Portnoy revealed Thursday that "billionaire after billionaire" have offered to help bankroll him to run against Mayor Mamdani.

Portnoy told Jeff Edelstein on the latest Business of Betting podcast that the "unsolicited" financial promises are being made by "serious people."

"If I wanted to run for mayor of New York, I could have the biggest war chest probably in the history of political war chests," Portnoy told Edelstein.

"I have billionaire after billionaire willing to fund a campaign if I was going to do it." *David DeTurris*

STUDIO HORROR

Kevin C. Downs/NYP; NBC (top left photo)

'TODAY' SHOW SHAKEN: Al Roker (left) and Craig Melvin were targeted at the studio Thursday allegedly by Andrew Truelove (far right), who had breached security and was soon in NYPD custody.

Bigoted lunatic's NBC host attack

By JOE MARINO, AMANDA WOODS and OLI COLEMAN

An unhinged heckler slipped past security at NBC's "Today" show Thursday morning, lunging at host Craig Melvin and hurling a racial slur as he stormed the set, according to cops and sources.

The scary scene played out at around 9 a.m. when Andrew Truelove, 41, allegedly barged into an unauthorized area in a vestibule near Studio 1A at the Rockefeller Plaza studio and demanded face time with Al Roker.

But the intruder instead came face-to-face with Melvin and disturbingly called him the N-word, according to law-enforcement sources.

Security alert

Melvin alerted security before the wacko was detained by a member of the NYPD working a paid detail at the building, according to NBC and the sources.

The suspect was taken into custody without a fight, and no one was hurt, according to NBC.

Meanwhile, Page Six has learned that NBC fired the member of the security team who allowed the suspect to get in.

Truelove was charged with burglary, menacing and criminal trespass as hate crimes — as well as harassment, police said.

The shocking episode wasn't seen captured on air, but a photo taken inside the studio shows Melvin surrounded by several people in the aftermath.

"TODAY is cooperating fully with law enforcement as they investigate the matter," the NBC morning show said in a statement.

"NBC and TODAY take the safety and security of our employees, talent, staff and guests extremely seriously. We are reviewing the incident and our security protocols and remain committed to providing a safe and secure environment for everyone who works at and visits our studios," the statement added.

Truelove has eight unsealed previous arrests in the city, mostly for criminal mischief, the sources said.

He has been on probation since June 18 for that offense, according to the sources.

Previous assault rap

In a more violent act, he allegedly attacked a staffer at his Bowery residence in January — allegedly grabbing the worker's arm and slamming a door into it, the sources said.

He was charged with second-degree assault in that incident, according to the sources.

Thursday's security breach left "Today" show staffers uneasy, especially after seeing host Savannah Guthrie live through the nightmare of her still-missing mom Nancy's abduction.

"They were already on edge because of Savannah," a source told Page Six.

The source called Thursday morning's scare "chilling."

While the intruder did not enter the actual on-air studio, the man did reach the studio staircase where the confrontation occurred.

Additional reporting by Ariel Zilber

Outrage as C. Park rider free from lax laws

JOGGER COMA IN E-BIKE HORROR

By GREG CARLTON, JOE MARINO
and HALEY BROWN

GoFundMe; Stefano Giovannini

TRAGIC: A 43-year-old Upper West Side jogger identified so far only as Jean, was struck from behind by an e-bike allegedly riding the wrong way July 7 in Central Park. Jean remains in a coma.

Number of e-bike crashes in NYC are on the rise:

- There were **514** e-bike collisions so far this year, **9** of which were fatal, public records show.
- For the same time period in 2025, there were **384** collisions involving e-bikes, **6** of which were fatal.

An avid Upper West Side jogger was run down from behind by an e-bike rider allegedly going the wrong way in Central Park — and is now in a medically induced coma, according to her family and a witness.

The "vibrant" 43-year-old runner, identified by her first name, Jean, had to have a portion of her skull removed during emergency cranial surgery following the harrowing July 7 crash, her niece, Brandi Wiltse, told The Post on Thursday.

"Now, over a week from the incident, she is still not awake, still in a medically induced coma," Wiltse said.

But the electric bike driver involved is not facing any consequences, according to the police and an outraged Wiltse — who said the city can "absolutely" do more to hold reckless cyclists accountable.

"After this, the fact that there is no accountability, there's no registration requirement, there's no insurance . . . There should be laws in place," she said.

Jean was jogging on West Drive, near West 64th Street, at around 4:38 p.m., when she was hit by the e-bike rider, who was described by cops only as a 26-year-old man.

Rider 'tried to get away'

Witness Hoon Chan Sim said the cyclist was allegedly driving fast in the wrong direction in the running lane — instead of using the lane designated for bikes — and hit Jean from behind as she ran, causing her to fall and land on her head.

"He was going the wrong way on the running track," Sim said. "I heard a really loud screeching noise. My guess is that he was going pretty fast."

The cyclist — who appeared to be a "courier," based on his fast-looking bike — allegedly tried to leave but other pedestrians surrounded him to force him to stay and wait for first responders, Sim said.

"The saddest thing was that he didn't look at the victim. He was trying to get away from it but people gathered around him so he couldn't," Sim said.

"Jesus, I mean, the woman was bleeding out of [her] ears."

EMTs rushed Jean to NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center with head injuries in "stable condition," police said.

"She was moaning, and people were tending to her, like, saying, 'Are you OK?' and then she was just moaning all the time on the sidewalk. She was pretty much unconscious, non-responsive," Sim said.

Wiltse told the West Side Rag, which first reported on Jean's condition Wednesday, that her aunt was checked into the hospital as a "Jane Doe" because she was unconscious.

She had three blood transfusions and also suffered a broken elbow that required surgery and lacerations so deep she needed skin grafts, Wiltse told The Post.

Wiltse said her parents would be traveling from Georgia to be with Jean, who lost her job in April, and had packed for "an indefinite amount of time."

"We're just all trying to do whatever we can because we do not want her to be alone when she wakes up," she said.

The NYPD, in a statement, said the "26-year-old male operator of the two-wheeled vehicle remained on scene" — but wouldn't say whether he had been ticketed or even confirm whether there was an ongoing investigation Thursday.

But Wiltse said police told her they were no longer investigating her aunt's accident. She said cops should look into the witness claims that the e-bike rider was going the wrong-way.

"If he was traveling the way the laws intended, that's one thing. That's something the police should look into."

Mayor Mamdani in March issued an executive order ending criminal enforcement of certain low-level e-bike violations and limiting police to civil tickets.

Driving the wrong way would have been a criminal offense for bikers prior to Mamdani's order.

'Taco' lettuce firm eyed in diarrhea

Taco Bell lettuce supplied by a popular produce company has been identified as a potential source of contamination behind the parasitic illness saddling thousands of Americans with explosive diarrhea, according to a new report.

Shredded iceberg lettuce supplied to the fast food chain by Taylor Farms has been linked to this summer's outbreak of cyclosporiasis, according to two individuals familiar with the investigation, The Washington Post reported.

"The signal we have gotten is that there is a very high percentage of people who got sick at Taco Bell, and when investigators asked what their menu items were in common, lettuce came up frequently," said one of the individuals who spoke to the outlet on the condition of anonymity due to the ongoing investigation.

When the Food and Drugs Administration asked the Mexican fast food giant where they get their lettuce from, Taylor Farms was identified as supplying to stores in Michigan and three other states, where the outbreak has been the largest, according to the source.

Taylor Farms did not immediately respond to The Post's request for comment.

Ella Morrison

Bad NY 'Legion' testing

Hundreds of cooling towers around the Big Apple were dinged by health inspectors over issues relating to Legionella testing since last year, The Post has learned.

Nearly 250 water-cooling towers — more than half of them in Manhattan — were issued violations after the health department found Legionella samples were "not collected, analyzed or results [were] not reported" to the health department, as required since Jan. 1, 2025.

Another 44 Brooklyn cooling towers were cited for the same non-compliance issue, as well as 22 in The Bronx; 19 in Queens and one in Staten Island.

The news comes after an Upper East Side cluster has sickened more than 63 and hospitalized 52 this month.

More than half of cooling towers in the affected outbreak area — spanning Yorkville and Carnegie Hill — were dinged for violations in the past year, a Post analysis revealed.

As part of its Legionnaires' probe, the health department found 73% of the cooling towers in the UES investigation area provided "the required information," spokesperson William Fowler said, adding the citywide compliance rate hovers at 77%. *Nicole Rosenthal*

East Village boarder war

They couldn't let it skate.

A scrawny skateboarder tangled with a Mercedes driver in an East Village street fight Tuesday — with one of them regretting it, a wild viral video shows.

The one-minute clip posted on X is packed with shocking twists and turns, including the skateboard being weaponized by its owner and then by the 34-year-old driver, then the owner who hit the SUV Tuesday along St. Marks Place near Second Avenue.

Spoiler alert: the motorist lost the fight after he ended up in a headlock, according to police and the video.

Matt Troutman

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THE BATTE FOR IRAN

Power grid threat

The latest American strikes on Iran demonstrate that President Trump is willing to make good on his threat to hit Tehran's power plants and bridges, according to a new report.

While the US has focused on hitting military installations threatening the Strait of Hormuz during its week-long bombing campaign, the attacks have also damaged more than 2,000 points along Iran's state-run electrical grid, according to Arab media.

Experts say the resulting blackouts were no coincidence as they came within hours of Trump's warning that Iran's lights would be forced off if Tehran failed to return to the negotiating table.

"[The US] struck support infrastructure while Trump is threatening to take the power," Sascha Bruchmann, a research fellow at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, told The Daily Telegraph.

"So there's now a little bit more of a threat in the air than just pure military targets."

Mohammad Allah-Dad, the head of Tavanir — Iran's state-run Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company — said the latest American strikes have caused about $1 billion in damage to the grid, digital news outlet Iran Wire reported.

The attacks have already put a great strain on the country's power grid, with Tavanir forced to implement a 4.200-megawatt reduction in capacity due to the damages so far.

Ronny Reyes

SLICK STRATEGY

who is next one?
#lindseygraham
DIAMOND

SLEAZE: A man waves an Iranian flag beneath a billboard tweaking President Trump and late US Sen. Lindsey Graham in Tehran Thursday.

AP

Red Sea gateway plug eyed

By ZOE HUSSAIN

Iran told Yemen's Houthi rebels Wednesday to prepare to close the crucial Bab el Mandeb Strait — the critical shipping lane on the west side of the Arabian Peninsula— if the US strikes Iranian power plants.

The Iran-backed Houthis have completed preparations to deploy missiles and drones to attack shipping near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a critical gateway to the Red Sea, a source close to the group told Reuters.

Iran has already declared that the Strait of Hormuz, on the east side of the Arabian Peninsula — is closed, and fired on multiple ships that have tried to pass through it.

The Islamic Republic's leadership recently requested the Houthis shutter the strait between Yemen and Djibouti and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa if the US attacks Tehran's power infrastructure, sources added.

The US has already hit more than 2,000 targets along Iran's state-run electrical grid during previous strikes — putting a strain on the country's power grid, according to Arab media.

A disruption to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, could escalate a global energy crisis already fueled by Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The Houthis also escalated tensions in the region, snarling a four-year truce by firing missiles at Saudi Arabia after accusing them of bombing an airport under their control on Monday.

Diverted west

Though more vessels pass through the Strait of Hormuz annually, a significant amount of Gulf oil has been diverted to the Red Sea through a Saudi pipeline, with the waterway now carrying roughly 7% of global energy supplies.

The Houthi attacks on vessels would leave the Middle East's two main oil export routes disrupted and throw the industry into chaos, experts said.

"If fighting intensifies and spills over into Red Sea export infrastructure and shipping, it will threaten the only major alternative route for oil exports from the region," said Torbjorn Solvedt, principal Middle East analyst with risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

Tensions have already led the price of Brent crude oil to remain stubbornly high, costing more than $84 per barrel on Thursday, about 22% higher than a year ago.

The average price of gas in the US has also skyrocketed to $3.94 a gallon, about 10 cents higher than last week.

'Strait' retort to US offer

Fed-up seafarers stranded in the Strait of Hormuz had an explicit message for US forces following its offer of safe passage amid repeated attacks on vessels from the Islamic Republic.

"F--k off," one sailor was heard saying over marine radio, obtained by The Wall Street Journal, after the US military insisted the strait was open.

The US had radioed ships in the waterway to direct them toward the Omani section of the strait under its protection, as the American blockade on Iran's ports took effect on Tuesday.

The curt response then followed.

Despite America's ongoing attacks near the Strait of Hormuz, the Islamic Republic has continued to fire warning shots and deadly strikes on ships that attempt to cross the strait without its permission.

Maritime experts have previously warned that a majority of ships will not risk crossing the Strait of Hormuz under wartime conditions. *Ronny Reyes*

American woman freed

President Trump announced Wednesday that Iran has released a wrongfully detained US citizen as a "gesture of Goodwill."

"Iran has allowed an American Citizen, who was wrongfully detained in December of 2024 under the 'presidency' of Sleepy Joe Biden, to leave the Country," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

"She is now safely outside of Iran, and in good condition," the president added. "The United States of America appreciates this gesture of Goodwill!"

The woman was identified as Dena Karari by her lawyer Jared Genser, who specializes in international human rights.

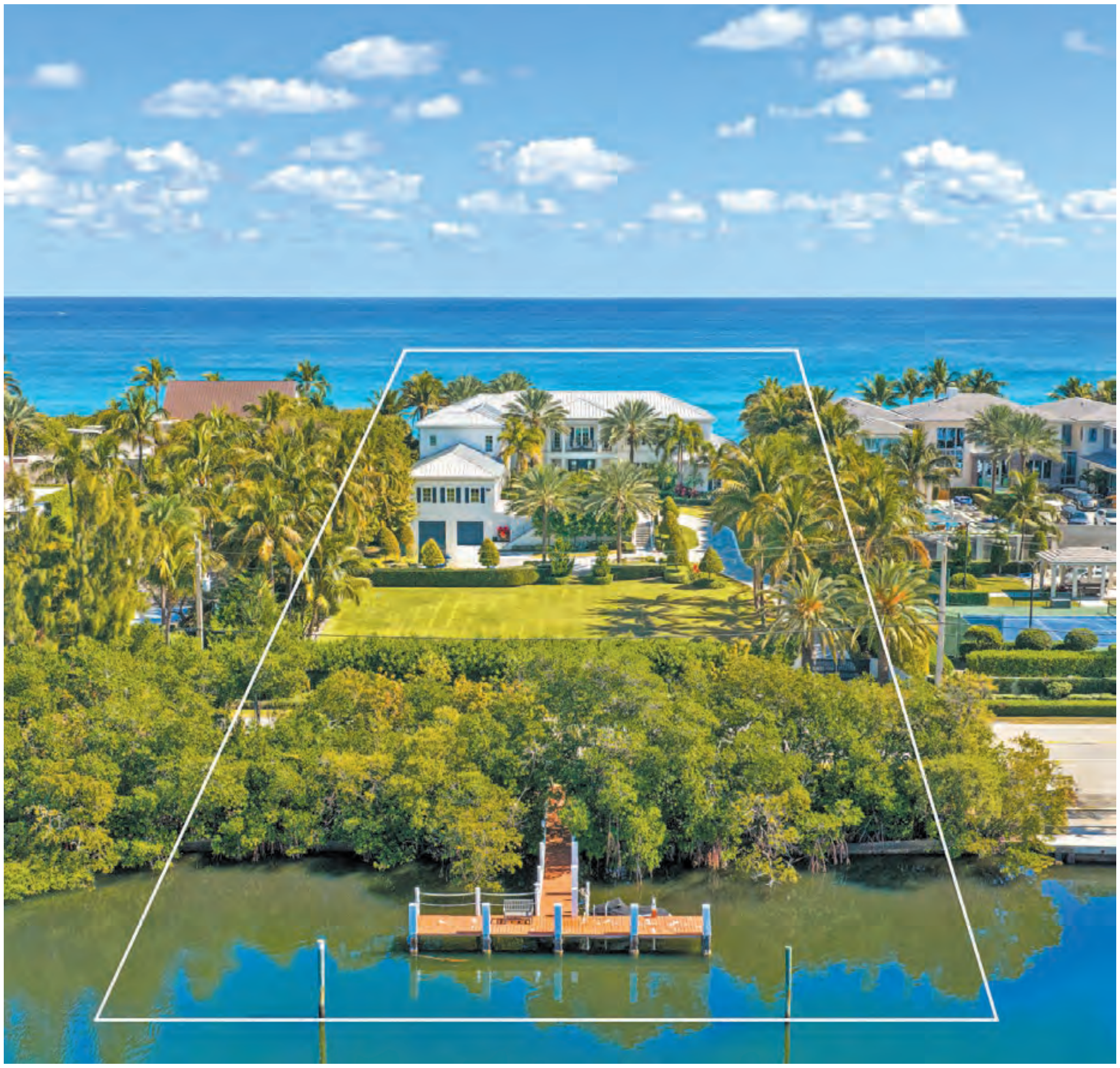
"My client, US citizen Dena Karari who had been trapped in Iran since December 2024 on bogus charges, is now free," he wrote on X.

The New York Times has reported the dual citizen worked for a US technology company and was charged with espionage.

Victor Nava

EST. 2006

CHRISTIAN ANGLE
REAL ESTATE



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Left-wing violence

MARCO RUBIO

It's high time we crush this evil forever

Secretary of State Marco Rubio opened the Ministerial on the Resurgence of Political Terrorism at the State Department yesterday, warning far-left extremism and violence are on the rise. Here is an excerpt of his remarks:

FOR far too long our counterterrorism doctrine has had a blind spot — a blind spot when it comes to extremist violence from the political left.

Even today, the very idea that far-left terrorism could be a serious threat is treated as a right-wing fever dream, or worse, as a dangerous fascist conspiracy. It's treated this way by many in the press, by many in academia and our universities and by many of our legacy institutions. You will no doubt see the dogma rear its head in the coverage of this very conference.

In spite of the clear and the undeniable reality, in spite of the objective numbers and statistics, in spite of the fact that in this room today there are representatives from across the political spectrum, we will hear this organized — that this kind of organized violence and terror will be dismissed. It will be dismissed as a partisan fiction.

A whole industry grew up in our countries around the study of extremism. We have think tanks and fellowships and journals and consultancies, with the unspoken understanding among them that the only kind of political violence that was a true threat to our system — I'm sorry — that only one kind of political violence was a true threat to the system.

A bomb planted by a neo-Nazi group was a nefarious and murderous act of evil. It is.

But a bomb planted by a Marxist revolutionary — well, that's just merely a tragic excess of idealism. Perhaps its means were misplaced or overzealous, but its ends were virtuous and just. That's the implication of how they treat it.

Ideological prejudice

For years, this extraordinary ideological prejudice was embedded in the way we talked about political violence and extremism. It was repeated again and again, until it was accepted as the neutral and objective baseline, so entrenched in the mainstream conventional wisdom that it came to be regarded as an apolitical fact.

It is the reason why, here in my country, so many people in positions of power have repeatedly dismissed acts of violence and even terrorism as legitimate forms of political expression so long as they served a left-wing cause.

It is why during those so-called George Floyd riots in the summer of 2020, as criminals and extremists burned and looted their way through America's great cities and nearly brought the country to its knees, city governments all across the country simply refused to prosecute the people conducting these acts of violence and terror.

It is the reason for the now-infamous image of a news anchor from a very prominent agency standing in a neighborhood consumed in flames; meanwhile the chyron on the bottom read that the protests were mostly peaceful.

This was something worse than a double standard. Left-wing violence was not just excused; it was treated as sacrosanct, a protected class unto itself. That era has to end.

Tragedy across globe

The coalition in this room today includes political leaders and experts and law enforcement officials from more than 60 countries across the world. You have come here from a wide range of governments, parties and political persuasions. Some of your governments and ours disagree publicly. Sometimes we disagree sharply about trade, about energy, about immigration.

You did not come here today because you have been persuaded on every single aspect of the American view of the world.

You came here because, two weeks ago, a 72-year-old woman was burned on over 80% of her body in her own home in Greece, and she died, executed by a firebomb because her daughter dared to stand for office.

You are here today because for five days this winter the lights went out in Berlin, the longest blackout in the city since the Second World War, sparked by an attack that left tens of thousands of households without power in the freezing cold and left an 83-year-old woman dead.

You are here and you came because, a month after that Berlin blackout, a French 23-year-old succumbed to traumatic brain injuries, beaten to death on the streets of Lyon by a group of far-left militant thugs.

You are here because your political leaders are being attacked and stabbed and shot in your streets, because your businesses have been bombed, because your railways have been sabotaged, because your police officers have been beaten and burned. You are here because this is real, and it is getting worse, and it can no longer be denied, and it can no longer be ignored, because it is time to crush this evil forever.

The simple fact is none of this that I've just described is new. Far-left political terrorism is not a recent-day, modern novelty. It is not a fiction manufactured by conservative politicians. For most of the modern era, it was, in fact, the dominant form of political violence.

Every one of our friends here from the nations of the Western Hemisphere remember — remember the decades of kidnappings and bombings and assassinations and executions, the violent terror of the Tupamaros, of the Montoneros, of the FARC, of the ELN. You remember the inhuman savagery of Peru's Shining Path, the Maoist fanatics who massacred the peasant villages of Peru, hacking pregnant women and newborn infants to death with axes and machetes.

You remember the tens of thousands of Marxist guerrillas trained to kill in Castro's terrorist camps.

US confronts radicals

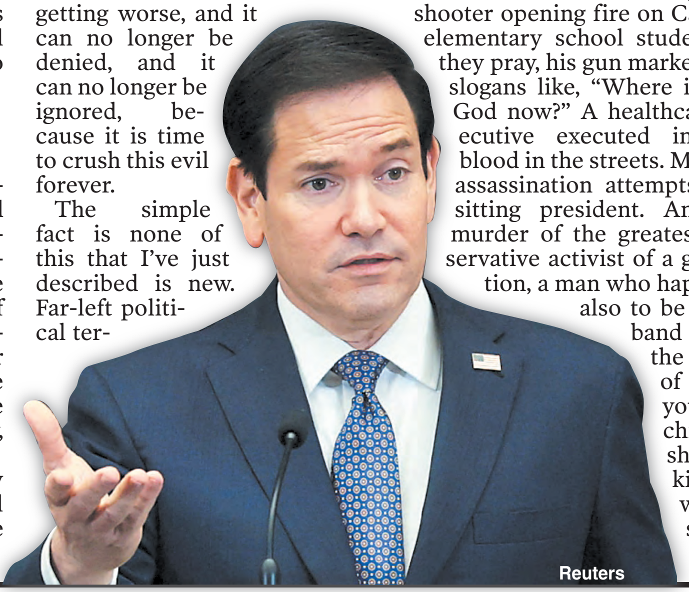
Today, we face a new wave of this old evil. Here in the United States, the share of left-wing terrorist attacks and plots has risen to levels not seen in decades. In Germany, far-left violence has jumped by more than 40% in just the last year alone. In Greece, more than 80% of radical violence is now driven by far-left and anarchist actors. These are not abstract statistics.

Americans have seen what those numbers mean — an all-out assault on our immigration officers, sniper attacks, explosives, armed ambushes. A transgender shooter opening fire on Catholic elementary school students as they pray, his gun marked with slogans like, "Where is your God now?" A healthcare executive executed in cold blood in the streets. Multiple assassination attempts on a sitting president. And the murder of the greatest conservative activist of a generation, a man who happened also to be a husband and the father of two young children, shot and killed while speaking to a crowd of students.

This is a distinctive and unique evil. It has always been driven by a hatred above all else, a hatred for civilization itself.

It is a revolt of the worst against the best, a revolt of the weak and the cowardly against the strong and the good.

It is perpetrated by those who cannot build, who cannot create, who cannot achieve great things, and take their revenge upon the world for their own inadequacy by seeking to destroy those who can. This is what radical leftism


Reuters

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LATE CITY FINAL
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THE HATE WHITE NORTH
PAGES 4-5
Canadian in ICE custody after slapping teen over Trump clothing

By CHRIS NESI

Wild video appears to show the moment crazy Canadian illegal immigrant Kaitlyn Tracey battered a teenager at the Jersey Shore over Fourth of July weekend for sporting pro-Trump gear, landing her in ICE custody.

In a brief snippet of video showing the alleged attack circulating widely online, a woman in dark clothing and a hat is seen stepping toward a younger-looking female wearing a USA 250 tank top, angrily swinging at her twice before a man escorts her away.

Ice custody

The woman in the video appears to be Tracey, 33 — with similar hair and clothing to her mug shot and social media pics.

The Canadian national was taken into ICE

real, getting worse

Canucklehead sucker punch

A ONE-WAY TICKET HOME? Bird-flipping Kaitlyn Tracey allegedly punched a teen girl wearing a USA 250 tank top on the Jersey Shore (inset) and faces deportation to Canada for overstaying her visa.

Obtained by NY Post (3)

custody after the alleged July 3 assault on the teen, turning herself in to police July 13 after learning she had been charged with endangering the welfare of a child, simple assault, harassment and obstruction a few days earlier.

She was briefly held at the Ocean County Jail before being transported to Delaney Hall in Newark, the now-infamous immigration detention facility where cops and anti-ICE protesters have violently clashed in recent weeks.

The agency says she entered the US with a passport in 2024 but overstayed her visa, which could make her eligible for deportation.

cnesi@nypost.com

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is. It may wear various different slogans and ideologies across place and time. They can call themselves anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist or communist or anarchist or Marxist.

But the fundamental character is always the same. It's always the same.

It is a poisonous resentment cloaked in the language of equality and justice and liberation, an overwhelming need to tear down what greater men have built, to wreck what is beautiful and what is right on behalf of people who are only filled with ugliness and have nothing else to offer the world.

Through violence and through terror, they once again seek to impose their ugliness on all of us. The old dogma was wrong. The old dogma was wrong; none of this is driven by idealism.

It is not utopian. In fact, it is the opposite.

One of the criticisms you sometimes hear of communism is that it sounds good in theory but it never works in practice. That's actually not true. Communism does not sound good in theory. The world it envisions for all of us is small, flat, grey, leveled of all exception, drained of all that is good and noble in the human soul.

Beware communism

The world it envisions is a world without courage, a world without creativity or ambition, a world without heroes or glory or great causes to strive towards, without — a world without miracles, without myths, without men who rise above the rest to do incredible and extraordinary things. And the world communism envisions is a world without God.

For these architects of revolutionary violence, the towering achievement of our civilization — for them it's an unbearable humiliation, a reminder of what they cannot do and a reminder of what they cannot be. So they choose instead to destroy.

They attack pipelines; they attack railroads; they attack power grids and laboratories, the physical embodied symbols of power and invention and achievement. This is the nature of the terrorism we face today. They despise the West because the West is great.

It is easy to destroy great things; it is far more difficult to make them. The enemies of civilization are only capable of the former. They are only capable of destroying great things. All they know is destruction. But we have built great things together. We have done it time and again. We know what we must do, and now we must do it.

Trump grounds flights of fancy

Page Six®

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PRESIDENT **Donald Trump**'s planned attendance at the World Cup in East Rutherford, NJ, this weekend will mean a temporary flight restriction across large swaths of the New York metropolitan area — and plenty of inconvenienced rich people are now scrambling because they can't fly privately.

The restriction will be in effect Friday and Sunday from 2 to 8 p.m. each day, according to a memo reviewed by The Post.

That means anyone hoping to helicopter to the Spain-Argentina match or take a private jet in or out of Teterboro Airport is out of luck. Some sources are now forced to decide between flying off-peak hours, taking a car or ferry to MetLife or scrapping their plans entirely, reports The Post's **Lydia Moynihan**.

"Flying in to Teterboro for the game when you have to land at noon and wait in a lounge three hours for a game to start loses its extravagance," said one source who planned to fly in from Los Angeles and go straight to Sunday's 3 p.m. game. He noted that the whole point of shelling out to fly private is to avoid inconvenience.

Adding insult to injury: Landing at nearby airports the day of the World Cup final incurs a special event fee of up to $20,000 per jet and $5,300 per helicopter.

Even after the game, all private travel will be grounded until the president leaves the area.

The Secret Service typically shuts down airspace within a 30-mile radius of the president. Every aircraft is subject to restrictions, but commercial flights are often given pre-approved routes, while private aviation is essentially grounded. Pilots who ignore the orders can be fined, intercepted or even shot down.

And Trump's visit won't just impact those going to the World Cup. The flight restrictions are also hitting New Yorkers making their weekly summer exodus to the Hamptons, including by seaplane. One source griped, "I now have to blow up my day and leave the office at noon Friday" to be able to fly out of the city.

Harriet's 'tragedy'

ROSIE O'Donnell claims Michelle Trachtenberg struggled with addiction before her death, calling the loss of her "Harriet the Spy" co-star a "tragedy." "In the last few years, when she was in pretty bad shape, she would call me," the former talk show host told Variety. "We were supposed to see each other three or four times, and she just never showed up . . . I tried to help her as much as I could, but she was inaccessible toward the end, and it was tragic." O'Donnell said the actress allegedly "got into drugs and alcohol." Trachtenberg died of complications from diabetes at 39 in February 2025. Her rep did not respond to Page Six's request for comment.

Hardly hale 'Mary'

"OH" no! **Meg Stalter** has missed "Oh, Mary!" shows just a week after making her debut in the Broadway hit. The "Hacks" star (above) took over as the lead July 6 for a run scheduled till September. But she's been off the stage already, covered by understudies. Stalter posted yesterday, "I'm so sad to have missed shows . . . this week as I'm very very sick with Bronchitis (we are hoping not pneumonia!!)." She expects to be back this weekend. The role, originated by **Cole Escola**, has also been played by **Tituss Burgess**, **Betty Gilpin** and **Maya Rudolph**.

Bella! Paulina Porizkova shares a snap from her wedding to TV writer and producer Jeff Greenstein last week in Italy.

Gabe Sachs/paulinaporizkov/Instagram

Princess cruises to luxe bachelorette

DIANE von Furstenberg's granddaughter Princess **Talita von Furstenberg** celebrated her upcoming marriage to banking heir **Rocco Brignone de Brabant** with a bachelorette party aboard a luxury yacht off the Italian coast with an international crew of society scions and jet-set pals. Talita's cousin Princess **Maria-Olympia** of Greece, New York Giants owner **Steve Tisch**'s daughter **Elizabeth**, LA socialite **Abby Smidt**, **Siena Freitag**, **Jim Belushi**'s daughter **Jamison**, **Molly Cody**, **Audrey Kotick** and real estate agent **Andrew Beyer** were part of festivities, which included posing for photos wearing tees bedazzled with "No longer von Furstenberg but always von Fabulous" and "La dolce Talita." The group also donned fake tattoos of Brignone's head. Talita's father is Prince **Alexander von Furstenberg**, a member of the Italian Agnelli family. Brignone's family owns Costa Careyes, a private community in Mexico. Talita, 27, and Rocco, 25, got engaged last August.

Order in TV court

NEW York's troubled WPIX news is on trial. Channel 11's longtime entertainment anchor, **Ojinika Obiekwe**, filed a retaliation suit against the local news station and its parent company, Nexstar, last year, and the case came in front of a judge this week. Obiekwe says that while she was terminated in 2022 for alleged "insubordination" and "failure to perform job duties," she claims she was abruptly fired for speaking out against racism and discrimination. Jury selection in the case started on Monday, and she took the stand twice, concluding her testimony on Wednesday. "It was emotional, but it felt right because I didn't back down," she told Page Six. WPIX vehemently denies Obiekwe's claims.

A Fine end point

CHLOE Fineman won't be returning to "Saturday Night Live." "After 7 wonderful seasons at 'SNL' I have decided it's time for my next chapter," the actress (above) announced via Instagram yesterday. "It's cliche to say this but working at 'SNL' has been the greatest privilege of my life. I still can't really believe I got to be a part of it." Following the exits of castmates **Heidi Gardner** and **Ego Nwodim** ahead of last year's Season 51, Fineman, 37, was the longest-standing female cast member. She added of the sketch show, "You respect it so much that you give it absolutely everything you have even when it's incredibly stupid."

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Heat over refusing Nat. Guard

A Memphis pizzeria owner is facing fierce backlash after refusing over the weekend to serve members of the National Guard deployed to the city to combat crime.

Miles Tamboli, proprietor of Tamboli's Pasta & Pizza, sparked the controversy by turning away troops stationed in the city since September 2025 — and he declared in a Thursday statement that he would "make the same decision tomorrow."

Tamboli argued that utilizing soldiers trained for overseas combat in local law enforcement roles has compromised city safety.

The move to refuse the troops on Saturday night has drawn heavy fire online.

US Rep. Tim Burchett wrote, "When I get home I'm driving to Memphis and not eating there."

Daniel Cody

Con Ed death suit

Fifth Ave. manhole plunge horror

By ZOE HUSSAIN

The heartbroken family of the grandmother killed after falling into a steaming, open manhole two months ago has filed a wrongful-death suit against Con Edison for failing to secure the access point that also left her boyfriend burned and bedridden.

Donike Gocaj's family and partner filed the lawsuit against the utility company in Manhattan Supreme Court Thursday, alleging the utility company's negligence led the Westchester woman to plunge into the uncovered, sweltering utility hole on May 18.

Gocaj (inset), 56, had stepped out of her vehicle to meet up with boyfriend Jashar "Jack" Kameraj between work shifts that night when she plummeted into the manhole near East 52nd Street and Fifth Avenue, family attorney Howard Hershenhorn told The Post.

The hardworking mother screamed, "I'm dying, I'm dying," as Kameraj tried to get down the manhole to save her, and terrified bystanders ran up and down the street in search of a ladder to pull her to safety.

But Gocaj eventually succumbed to horrific scald burns, inhalation thermal injuries and blunt-force trauma as she remained trapped.

Kameraj also suffered devastating inhalation thermal injuries and burns, leaving him now bedridden, according to the lawsuit filed by the firm Gair, Gair, Conason, Rubinowitz, Bloom, Hershenhorn, Steigman, and Mackauf.

"It was a frantic scene, right there with everybody trying to save her because they could see her through the hole. They could hear her through the hole, but they could not help her," Hershenhorn said.

"And Jack . . . she was really his family, and she was the closest person to him, and they would see each other all the time, every day, and they were extremely close," he added.

Gocaj's family claims Con Ed endangered Gocaj, Kameraj, and scores of New Yorkers by not implementing proper safety measures to prevent manhole covers from dislodging.

The company knew that its manhole covers could "become dislodged and displaced by, among other things, vehicle traffic and/or heavy vehicles," the filing alleged.

A representative for Con Ed previously told The Post a passing truck appeared to have dislodged the utility hole's cover less than 15 minutes before Gocaj arrived Monday night and parked along the avenue.

Cardiac death at Disney

A Walt Disney World guest died three months ago after suffering a cardiac arrest while riding one of the park's most popular attractions, a new report revealed.

A 54-year-old man with a preexisting heart condition suffered a cardiac emergency on April 2 while riding the It's a Small World boat ride attraction in Orlando, according to the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services report. The Magic Kingdom parkgoer was transported to a local hospital and later died.

The death was not publicly reported at the time in April and only came to light when the Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services released their second-quarter report on Wednesday. Since opening in 1971, the Florida theme park has experienced around 70 deaths.

Ella Morrison

Post Weather Report

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Friday

Today: Less humid with hazy sunshine. High 84 to 90.

Tonight: Some clouds; more humid. Low 69 to 75.

Saturday

Tomorrow: Not as warm with a shower and t-storm. High 77 to 83.

Tomorrow night: Humid with a t-storm. Low 69 to 75.

Sunday

A morning shower. High 80 to 86.

Evening
Mostly clear. Low 64 to 70.

Monday

Mostly sunny. High 79 to 85.

Evening
Partly cloudy. Low 68 to 74.

Almanac

YESTERDAY'S CONDITIONS AT CENTRAL PARK THROUGH 6PM

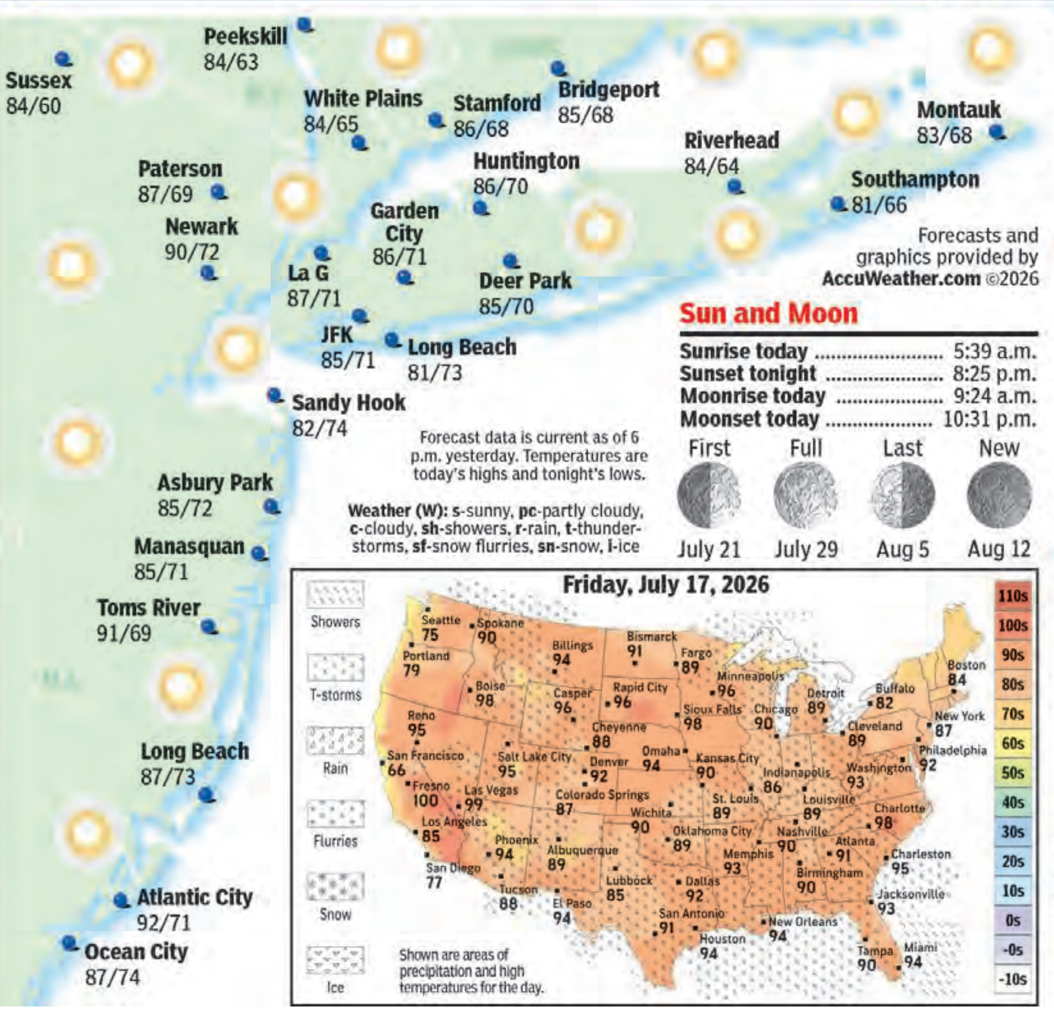
Temperature
High: 85, Low: 74, Mean: 80

Departure from Normal
Yesterday: +2 degrees

Precipitation
Yesterday: trace, Month: 1.83",
Year: 19.65", Normal year to date: 25.95"

Cooling Degree days yesterday..............15
Total for the month (normal).......219 (198)
Total since Jan. 1 (normal)..........619 (506)
Last year to date..................................557
Heat Index (at noon yest.) 82
UV index (for Fri.) .... 10 (Very High)
Humidity (at noon) 54%

AIR QUALITY
Pollen: Low Predominant pollen: Trees, Weeds
AQI rating: (for Fri.).....................Moderate


Sussex
84/60
Peekskill
84/63
White Plains
84/65
Stamford
86/68
Bridgeport
85/68
Paterson
87/69
Newark
90/72
Garden City
86/71
Huntington
86/70
Riverhead
84/64
Montauk
83/68
Southampton
81/66
La G
87/71
Deer Park
85/70
JFK
85/71
Long Beach
81/73
Sandy Hook
82/74
Asbury Park
85/72
Manasquan
85/71
Toms River
91/69
Long Beach
87/73
Atlantic City
92/71
Ocean City
87/74
Friday, July 17, 2026
Showers
T-storms
Rain
Flurries
Snow
Ice
110s
100s
90s
80s
70s
60s
50s
40s
30s
20s
10s
0s
-0s
-10s
Seattle 75
Spokane 90
Portland 79
Billings 94
Bismarck 91
Fargo 89
Boise 98
Casper 96
Rapid City 96
Minneapolis 96
Detroit 89
Buffalo 82
Boston 84
Reno 95
Cheyenne 88
Sioux Falls 98
Chicago 90
Cleveland 89
New York 87
San Francisco 66
Salt Lake City 95
Denver 92
Omaha 94
Kansas City 90
Indianapolis 86
Washington 93
Philadelphia 92
Fresno 100
Las Vegas 99
Colorado Springs 87
Wichita 90
St. Louis 89
Louisville 89
Charlotte 98
Los Angeles 85
Phoenix 94
Albuquerque 89
Oklahoma City 89
Memphis 93
Nashville 90
Atlanta 91
Charleston 95
San Diego 77
Tucson 88
El Paso 94
Lubbock 85
Dallas 92
Birmingham 90
Jacksonville 93
San Antonio 91
Houston 94
New Orleans 94
Tampa 90
Miami 94

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather.com** ©2026

Forecast data is current as of 6 p.m. yesterday. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

Weather (W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **r**-rain, **t**-thunderstorms, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice

Sun and Moon

Sunrise today .... 5:39 a.m.
Sunset tonight .... 8:25 p.m.
Moonrise today .... 9:24 a.m.
Moonset today .... 10:31 p.m.

First	Full	Last	New
July 21	July 29	Aug 5	Aug 12

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for the day.

New York Tides	TODAY		TOMORROW	
High Tide for	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Coney Island	10:59a	11:10p	11:53a	---
Fire Island	10:54a	11:18p	11:51a	---
Hempstead	2:04a	2:38p	2:54a	3:27p
Huntington	1:58a	2:30p	2:48a	3:19p
Jones Inlet	10:43a	10:54p	11:37a	11:46p
Montauk Point	11:59a	---	12:20a	12:55p
Port Washington	2:11a	2:45p	3:00a	3:33p
Sandy Hook	11:03a	11:14p	11:57a	---

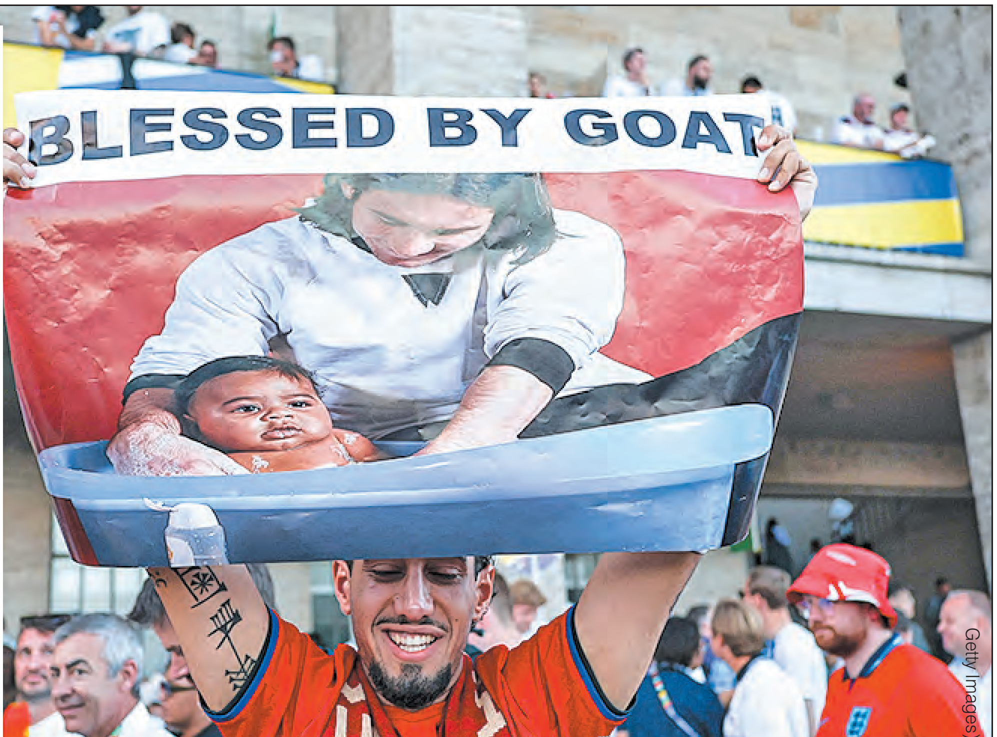
Regional cities	TODAY	TOMORROW
Albany	82/59/pc	81/68/t
Danbury	83/61/pc	80/70/t
Glens Falls	82/55/pc	80/64/t
Gr Barrington	80/57/pc	79/66/t
Kingston	84/60/pc	79/67/t
Liberty	79/59/pc	73/64/t
Monticello	81/59/pc	75/65/t
Newburgh	85/61/pc	78/68/t
Poughkeepsie	85/59/pc	80/71/t
Saratoga Springs	83/59/pc	81/65/t
Stroudsburg	86/63/pc	76/67/t
Torrington	81/59/pc	78/66/t
Syracuse	81/64/pc	84/64/t

World cities	TODAY	TOMORROW
Athens	95/77/s	95/76/s
Baghdad	114/85/s	118/91/s
Beijing	92/68/pc	86/70/t
Berlin	83/63/r	78/56/sh
Cairo	97/77/pc	99/78/pc
Dublin	76/51/pc	71/51/pc
Geneva	86/63/t	84/61/pc
Hong Kong	89/83/t	90/83/t
Jerusalem	87/69/s	90/70/s
Kabul	95/73/pc	98/74/pc
London	85/60/s	80/55/s
Madrid	95/68/s	98/68/s
Mexico City	72/55/r	74/57/r
Montreal	77/61/s	71/62/sh
Moscow	71/51/s	78/58/s
Paris	85/64/t	87/59/s
Rio de Janeiro	77/65/s	79/66/s
Rome	92/74/s	93/74/s
Sydney	63/55/r	66/56/sh
Tokyo	88/77/sh	89/78/t

‘MESS’TINED TO MEET

This final written in the stars

KIRSTEN FLEMING



Getty Images)

WHOA, baby!

On Sunday, Spain will take on Argentina in the World Cup final at Metlife Stadium.

But was this showdown eerily foreshadowed nearly 20 years ago, when a young FC Barcelona star Lionel Messi held and bathed a then-chunky baby Lamine Yamal for a charity UNICEF calendar shoot?

Did the soccer gods set this table?

And how did a series of incredible images from 2007 prove so prescient?

It all started with a simple Spanish newspaper raffle to find local Catalonia babies to pose for the charity calendar with players from FC Barcelona.

First on-field meeting

A 6-month-old Lamine Yamal was one of the 12 chosen. Of all the featured players — including, reportedly, Ronaldinho and legendary defender Carles Puyol and future FC Barcelona manager Xavi Hernández — Yamal was matched with Messi.

Chosen by chance or fate? We’ll never know.

In 2023, a 15-year-old Yamal first took the field for Barcelona. He only missed playing with Messi by two years, as the latter left for Paris Saint-Germain and, now, Inter Miami.

Making this World Cup final even more exciting: It will be the first time that Yamal, 19, and Messi, 39, have ever played against each other.

The charming calendar photos brought a whole other layer to the Spanish phenom’s emergence. Was there some sort of flow or transfer of powers from Messi to this baby, who would grow up to become an international superstar even before his braces were removed?

It’s not the only wacky photographic or video evidence of future athletes interacting with other pros.

US swimmer Katie Ledecky shared a video of herself as a 2-year-old playing peekaboo with Michael Jordan in a suite at a Capitals game — perhaps an early christening of her elite athleticism, which would debut at the London Olympics when she was only 15.

There’s also an old photo of a 10-year-old Lindsey Vonn meeting her idol Picabo Street at a Minneapolis ski shop in 1995. And we’ve all seen the adorable image of a young Patrick Mahomes shagging fly balls with the Mets’ Mike Hampton in 2000.

But many of these happened within the confines of fandom, competition or family connections.

Not in the cradle. Not from a raffle. Not with the universe dictating the terms.

Unbelievable but true

However, if someone wrote this in a movie script, it’d be torn up and tossed in the trash. Too unbelievable. Too ridiculous. No one is buying it! Maybe for a Marvel origin story, but not for real life.

As the granddaughter of Spanish immigrants, I’ll be cheering on the entire Spanish squad, especially the workhorse Mikel Oyarzabal and young Nico Williams, who plays for my favorite team, Athletic Bilbao. And, of course, Yamal, who has much more to prove than Messi.

The GOAT from Rosario, Argentina, already has one World Cup title under his belt, along with eight Ballon d’Or awards.

Those photos show just how unpredictably and fast life moves. One day Messi is holding a baby for charity. Nearly two decades later, that baby might be holding a golden trophy.

EARLY ‘HEADER’ START: Spain’s 19-year-old sensation Lamine Yamal (top left) was pictured with Argentine legend Lionel Messi (right) when Yamal was a baby (above).

New US attorney canned right after swearing in

The Trump Justice Department dismissed the newly appointed US attorney for western Washington state less than an hour after he was sworn in, setting up yet another legal battle over the president’s appointment powers.

Roger Rogoff, a former King County judge and veteran state and federal prosecutor, was sworn in Wednesday morning at the federal courthouse in downtown Seattle after he was unanimously appointed by the district’s 17 federal judges.

Rogoff told the Associated Press in a phone interview that he then went to the federal prosecutor’s office to request a meeting with first assistant US Attorney Charles Neil Floyd, a former immigration judge who had served as interim US attorney for a 120-day period that ended in February.

While waiting to meet with Floyd, Rogoff said, he received an email informing him of his removal by President Trump.

“District court judges can appoint a temporary U.S. Attorney, and POTUS can fire them,” acting Attorney General Todd Blanche posted on X Wednesday evening. “WDWA judges abandoned the time-honored process of consultation with the administration so that the selected U.S. Attorney is qualified to serve in the administration. Roger Rogoff has been fired by the President.”

US attorneys must be confirmed by the Senate, except in the case of interim appointments. Once an interim appointment expires after 120 days, federal judges can pick the new US attorney for any district.

Trump never formally submitted Floyd’s nomination to the Senate, opting to keep him as first assistant US attorney in a controversial personnel move.

Samuel Chamberlain, With Wires

KO visa fraud & restore hope for US kids

LYDIA MOYNIHAN

THE H-1B investigation into foreigners exploiting worker visas in the US has moved at a rapid pace since Vice President JD Vance announced it last week — with the Department of Labor (DOL) already preparing affidavits, sources tell me, as they examine alleged abuse of a program they say is rife with fraud.

"We have areas . . . where we're already in the process of writing up affidavits to swear out search warrants," said Anthony D'Esposito, the DOL inspector general leading the investigation.

While the immediate focus is on rooting out fraud — and whether a program meant to bring exceptional talent into the country has been stretched into a cheap labor pipeline — it also addresses a bigger issue: Can the government restore Gen Z citizens' faith that they are needed to build our future?

"H-1B abuse isn't just about jobs. It's about whether young Americans still believe they have a fair shot at the American dream," D'Esposito added.

"It's also a mindset. When you grew up in a household where you're constantly hearing that we're not good enough — that the foreign labor is not only cheaper, but they are more sophisticated, they're more talented — what does that do?"

Protect American worker

JOB TO DO: Federal prober Anthony D'Esposito (below) says fighting H-1B fraud will help young US tech job hunters.

Getty Images

CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images

A dose of hope

Indeed, this crackdown comes as Gen Z and young millennials are feeling malaise about the future, with a new analysis of census data indicating a record 25 million adults under 35 are still living with their parents.

Making sure homegrown talent isn't getting replaced is one way to inject optimism — and, ideally, to prevent a self-fulfilling prophecy that stops kids from wanting to go into tech and other fields that rely heavily on H-1Bs.

"Our job is to make sure that we protect the American worker and give the American jobs to the American people that need them," D'Esposito said.

If a college student or recent grad sees the government finally pushing back on this, he said, they might think, "All right, this is good. There's an opportunity for me to be the success that I want to be."

When the H-1B program was created with the Immigration Act of 1990, around 52,000 of the visas were issued the first year. For fiscal year 2026, it's capped at 65,000 new visas, plus another 20,000 for foreigners who graduate with a master's or doctorate degree from a US college, according to US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

All told, there are now 730,000 H-1B visa holders in the US.

Roughly 65% of H-1B visas issued in 2025 are for workers at tech companies, according to Immigration Services.

But even some Silicon Valley insiders who previously opposed President Trump's effort to crack down on the program acknowledged to me that a reset is overdue.

Last week, news that Microsoft has received approval to bring on 2,273 H-1B visa holders but plans to lay off 4,800 current workers — roughly 20% of its Xbox workforce — hit a nerve online.

It seemed to confirm what many critics have long suspected: that H-1B is too often about bringing in cheaper, more dependent labor and less about filling gaps with truly rare talent.

Opened door for Elon

The debate over H-1B visas first exploded in late 2024, marking the first notable fissure between the Trump-aligned tech world pushing to keep the status quo and the MAGA base eager to crack down on immigration.

While several high-profile figures like Elon Musk — who initially came over on a student visa and obtained an H-1B for his technical and engineering expertise to work at the start-up Zip2 — have benefited from the program, others, including venture capitalist and "All-In" podcast host Chamath Palihapitiya, have publicly acknowledged they likely wouldn't get one today. (Raised in Canada, Palihapitiya now holds dual citizenship.)

So far, the IT consulting firm Cognizant is the only company D'Esposito has called out by name, telling Fox News that whistleblowers had raised concerns.

But sources suggest many big tech companies rely on thousands of visas as a way to cut costs.

D'Esposito told me investigators are responding to a wide range of complaints about the system being abused — much of which, he noted, has gone unaddressed for years.

"This extortion of the H-1B visa program is not new," D'Esposito said. He argued that past leadership across many inspector general offices had been "very much part of the bureaucratic rot that consumes Washington, DC."

To be sure, the US still wants the next Elon or Einstein to immigrate but we must also ensure that American children are encouraged to reach the stars.

Audio in Nolan's death

Pals of tragic teen Nolan Wells called for help when their boat suddenly malfunctioned and started taking on water, according to newly released audio obtained by NBC News from the day of his disappearance.

Wells, 18, traveled with his friends to Horn Island from the Mississippi mainland for the Fourth of July holiday — but didn't return with the group.

The boat — which had "like seven" people on board — experienced difficulty at 4 p.m. before making the journey back, according to audio.

"Hey, we're at the west tip of Horn, and our bilge pump stopped working. We're going. We're sinking. Can you all please come?" the outlet reported the boat's operator said.

"I want to get this boat unsank and towed back," the caller reportedly said.

The boat left the island at 4:31 p.m. and was towed for around three miles before resuming normal operation less than an hour later.

It reportedly returned to the location it originally left from at 5:44 p.m.

The circumstances leading to Wells' disappearance and death remain unclear — with civil rights lawyer Ben Crump representing the family. *Chris Bradford*

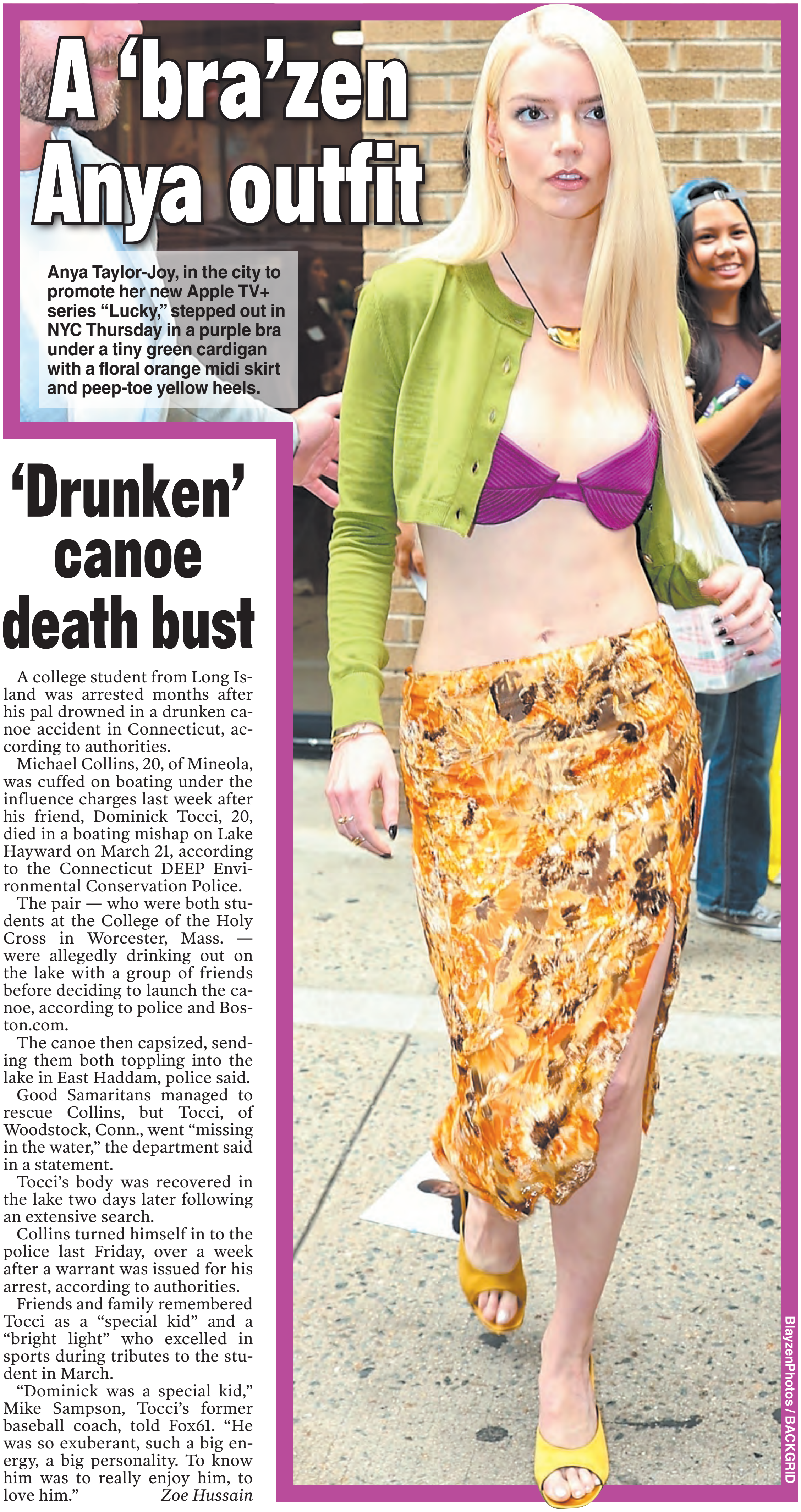
One more step to PM

Andy Burnham, nicknamed the "King of the North," will become leader of Britain's governing Labour Party Friday, the final step before becoming the nation's seventh prime minister in a decade on a pledge to thwart the rise of the populist Reform UK party.

At a "special conference" Friday, Burnham will be elected after gaining overwhelming support from Labour lawmakers.

The event is little more than a formality before he replaces the Labour Party's embattled Keir Starmer, who announced last month he was stepping down as prime minister. *Reuters*

A ‘bra’zen Anya outfit



Anya Taylor-Joy, in the city to promote her new Apple TV+ series “Lucky,” stepped out in NYC Thursday in a purple bra under a tiny green cardigan with a floral orange midi skirt and peep-toe yellow heels.

BlayzenPhotos / BACKGRID

‘Drunken’ canoe death bust

A college student from Long Island was arrested months after his pal drowned in a drunken canoe accident in Connecticut, according to authorities.

Michael Collins, 20, of Mineola, was cuffed on boating under the influence charges last week after his friend, Dominick Tocci, 20, died in a boating mishap on Lake Hayward on March 21, according to the Connecticut DEEP Environmental Conservation Police.

The pair — who were both students at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. — were allegedly drinking out on the lake with a group of friends before deciding to launch the canoe, according to police and Boston.com.

The canoe then capsized, sending them both toppling into the lake in East Haddam, police said.

Good Samaritans managed to rescue Collins, but Tocci, of Woodstock, Conn., went “missing in the water,” the department said in a statement.

Tocci’s body was recovered in the lake two days later following an extensive search.

Collins turned himself in to the police last Friday, over a week after a warrant was issued for his arrest, according to authorities.

Friends and family remembered Tocci as a “special kid” and a “bright light” who excelled in sports during tributes to the student in March.

“Dominick was a special kid,” Mike Sampson, Tocci’s former baseball coach, told Fox61. “He was so exuberant, such a big energy, a big personality. To know him was to really enjoy him, to love him.” *Zoe Hussain*

NIXON’S LATEST ROLE

Lefty vetting judges

By CARL CAMPANILE
and VAUGHN GOLDEN

And just like that . . . lefty actress Cynthia Nixon will get to screen and recommend candidates to serve on the state’s highest court, The Post has learned.

Nixon (inset) — who isn’t a lawyer but played one on the hit HBO show “Sex and the City” — was just appointed by New York Chief Judge Rowan Wilson to serve on the Commission on Judicial Nomination.

The commission suggests and vets potential judges to the Court of Appeals. Nixon’s appointment runs through April 30, 2030, and the position is unpaid.

“The Commission’s mandate is a powerful one: the Constitution requires that the Governor choose Judges of the Court of Appeals only from the nominees of the Commission,” the panel’s website says.

Outrage over selection

But most of the other dozen members of the panel are practicing lawyers or have law degrees.

Legal-community insiders were stunned and outraged by the appointment of the actress, who ran for governor in 2018 and endorsed Zohran Mamdani for mayor.

“She’s an actress! She’s known for ‘Sex and the City,’ ” fumed one lawyer flabbergasted by the pick.

State Senate Judiciary Committee ranking member Anthony Palumbo, a former Suffolk County prosecutor, said Nixon’s appointment was only “reinforcing the notion that the judiciary is now completely political.”

“I’m disappointed, but not surprised that we have a radical progressive actress without a law degree selecting judges in the state of New York,” said Palumbo, a Republican who reps the 1st State Senate District.

Saritha Komatireddy, a former prosecutor and the Republican candidate running against Democratic state Attorney General Letitia James, agreed: “Appointing a celebrity activist with zero legal background to help shape the future of our judiciary sends the wrong message entirely.”

Politics over safety

“This is part of a broader trend in New York: politics increasingly taking precedence over public safety and common sense,” Komatireddy told The Post.

“At a deeply critical time when New Yorkers are demanding safer streets and greater confidence in our institutions, our leaders should be focused on restoring trust in the justice system and not turning judicial appointments into a political game.”

Nixon’s biography on the commission website says: “Cynthia Nixon is a native New Yorker who began acting professionally at the age of 12 and has worked as an actor and director for nearly 50 years. Over the course of her career, she has won two Primetime Emmy Awards, two Tony Awards, and a Grammy Award for her reading of Al Gore’s An Inconvenient Truth.”

Best known for playing Miranda Hobbes in “Sex and the City,” the bio noted Nixon has played roles as varied as Emily Dickinson, Eleanor Roosevelt and Nancy Reagan.

Over the years, she has been an advocate for public school funding and has supported other social causes, and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Barnard College.

Her wife, Christine Marinoni, works as the chief of mass engagement at the Family and Community Empowerment (FACE) office at the Department of Education under Mamdani.

His '2nd' slaughter

Bx. suspect killed NFL dad

FAMILIES RUINED: Michael Foster is charged in the Bronx killing of his niece Julia Anderson (inset). Foster did jail time for killing Calvin Reed, the father of future NFL star Ray Rice (both below).

Facebook/Julia Anderson; Christopher Sadowski for NY Post; Paul J. Bereswill

By JOE MARINO, STEVEN VAGO
and JORGE FITZ-GIBBON

The Mount Vernon man charged with gunning down his niece over a property dispute once did prison time for the drive-by murder of former NFL star Ray Rice's father.

Michael Foster, 58, allegedly shot and killed his niece, 39-year-old Julia Anderson, outside her Bronx job Monday in a bitter squabble over a family home in Westchester County, law enforcement sources have said.

It wasn't Foster's first brush with the law.

"What's of note, your honor, is that the defendant has previously been convicted of manslaughter where he's served a significant amount of time," Bronx Assistant District Attorney Burim Namani said in court Thursday as Foster was arraigned.

"This is the second person he's killed, your honor," Namani said.

State corrections records show he was one of four people charged in the 1988 drive-by shooting death of Calvin Reed, the father of the former Rutgers and Baltimore Ravens running back.

Rice, 39, a native of New Rochelle, played for the 2013 Super Bowl champion Ravens, but is best remembered for the caught-on-video slugging of his then-girlfriend in an Atlantic City casino elevator the following year — derailing his football career. He later married the woman, Janay Palmer, but the shocking footage never faded.

Rice was still in diapers when Reed was killed — with Foster later hit with a sentence of 4 to 20 years in state prison on a first-degree manslaughter conviction.

Foster was denied parole three times before he was released in 1999, state records show.

He and his niece were embroiled in a legal dispute over a home at 18 Bell Ave. in Mount Vernon when he allegedly shot her several times in the stomach as she was about to step into her Jeep in Wakefield.

$27 million suit

Records show Foster and Anderson shared ownership of the home, but in recent years got into a bitter fight over who was the rightful owner.

In October, Anderson even filed a $27 million federal lawsuit against Westchester County prosecutors over her April 2025 arrest on accusations of "theft involving family property documents."

The court document suggests she blamed her uncle for the arrest.

"What began as a civil family dispute was transformed — without investigation or legal basis — into a months-long criminal ordeal that left deep and lasting scars," the federal filing said.

"The entire process was initiated not through evidence or probable cause, but through the unvetted statements of a known felon with a violent criminal history and a personal vendetta," it said, in an apparent reference to Foster.

He was ordered held without bail on murder, manslaughter and weapons charges for his niece's fatal shooting.

Outside the home, a relative told The Post on Thursday that she was "heartbroken" by the senseless slaying.

"I'm falling apart," said the 74-year-old woman, who declined to give her name. She said Anderson was married, but had no children.

With Peter Senzamici and Georgett Roberts

Mo. mom finds her girl slain at home

A Missouri teen was shot dead while hanging out with her friends, who are accused of not reporting the killing before her mother made the horrifying discovery inside their home.

Gabbriana Boyster, 16, was allegedly struck in the head in a Hillsboro, Mo., home Friday night — with her body not being found by her mom, Candy G'Sell, until the following afternoon, KDSK reported.

"I walked in the room and she was laying there . . . sitting up," the grieving mother told the outlet.

G'Sell immediately called 911, but by the time paramedics arrived, her daughter had been dead for hours.

Investigators with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office said Boyster was shot Friday evening, and her body remained inside the home "for hours," according to the outlet.

Police did not disclose what led to the fatal shooting or who owned the weapon.

Three boys were at Boyster's home at the time of the shooting, investigators suspect, and one was charged with involuntary manslaughter, unlawful use of a weapon resulting in death, armed criminal action, and abandonment of a corpse.

The two other juveniles were released from custody following charges of abandonment of a corpse.

The identities of all three minors are being withheld by authorities due to their ages.

G'Sell said the three boys were friends with her daughter. *Richard Pollina*

Meta's AI self-harm alert to parents

Meta is launching a new feature designed to prioritize child safety within its AI chatbots.

The update will notify parents via Instagram's supervision tools if their teenager discusses suicide or self-harm with Meta AI.

These protections allow Meta AI to direct teenagers to a crisis helpline while also encouraging them to reach out to a parent or a trusted adult.

Meta will send an alert to parents if a chat suggests their child is at risk due to clear or subtle references to self-harm. A dedicated AI system was specifically developed to identify these sensitive conversations.

In a statement, Meta — Facebook's parent company — said "we understand how distressing these alerts may be for a parent to receive. That's why, as we continue to improve our detection, all chats flagged by our AI will be manually reviewed before an alert is sent."

The announcement follows numerous wrongful-death suits against Meta by families and state attorneys general linking Meta's platforms to youth suicides and self-harm.

They also follow an announced UK ban on social media for children under 16.

Andrea Palladino

1976 murder vic ID'd

A murder victim found in a box in an Indiana cornfield has been identified — 50 years after the shocking discovery, investigators announced this week.

The woman was named as 69-year-old Jane Hart — who was born in 1906, the DNA Doe Project revealed Wednesday.

Hart, a housekeeper, was the daughter of a Croatian woman, who emigrated to the US the previous year before giving birth in Ohio.

Hart's body was found in a box by farmer Norman Skoog and his 16-year-old son Curtis on Oct. 8 1976 — and authorities believed the box had only been in the field for around 12 hours.

Chris Bradford

COP ACADEMY 'AWARD'

TECTIVE STEVEN D. McDONALD POLICE ACADEMY

PERMANENT HONOR: NYPD Capt. Conor McDonald gets emotional Thursday as the police academy in Queens is named for his father, Detective Steven McDonald, who was shot and paralyzed in 1986. He died in 2017, and some mementos are displayed (left) at the academy (below).

James Keivom for NY Post

NYPD training site named for hero McDonald

By AMANDA WOODS

The NYPD's Police Academy was officially renamed Thursday after one of the department's most storied fallen heroes who inspired his brothers in blue by spreading a message of forgiveness — even to the teen who nearly took his life.

The sprawling 30-acre Queens campus, responsible for training New York's Finest, now bears the name of Detective Steven D. McDonald — 42 years to the day that he joined the academy.

"I know that it would be Steven's wish and prayer that the women and men who enter this academy will always be very proud of putting on their uniforms and going out into the streets of this great city to serve and protect others — especially the most vulnerable, and most importantly, to finish their tour safely and to go home to their loved ones," said the hero detective's widow, Patti Ann McDonald.

McDonald had only two years on the job in July 1986 when a 15-year-old robbery suspect shot him three times in Central Park — with one of the bullets shattering the then-29-year-old cop's spine, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down.

McDonald, though wheelchair-bound and hooked up to a breathing device, lived for over three more decades, even forgiving the teen who nearly took his life, Shavod Jones.

"For 30-and-a-half years confined to a wheelchair, Dad never gave up. He believed that his story of love, forgiveness, and perseverance could change not only New York City, but the world," said his son, NYPD Capt. Conor McDonald, now an executive officer for the department's Deputy Commissioner of Public Information. "That's how special and contagious my father's love was.

'Life in service'

"My dad told me that he kept living not only for our family, but also to honor the cops that never made it home," he added, as a nod to those present whose loved ones were killed in the line of duty.

During the unveiling, Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch revealed that the academy now features an exhibit that displays McDonald's wheelchair and ventilator, replicas of his shields and photos from the days he was promoted.

"Steven understood what this place represented, the future of the department, and the beginning of a life in service to New York City," the top cop said. "It is fitting then that a new exhibit inside of this academy will preserve pieces of Steven's own life and career.

"What he endured, what he made of it, and what he gave this department could have come only from him," she added. "Forty-two years ago today, Steven McDonald's career began at the police academy. From this day forward, his example will begin here too."

Seven new signs bearing McDonald's name were also added to the state-of-the-art training facility, funded by the New York City Police Foundation, a spokesperson said.

The academy's new name was ceremonially unveiled as onlookers applauded and bag pipers played.

"What a gift that his love for this institution will live on in the generations of graduates who will find strength in his example," Mayor Mamdani said.

"As each class of officers graduate, they will face the difficult situations that their training prepared them for, and as they walk the beat, as they weigh what is right and wrong, as they search for the strength to go on, they will be guided by Detective McDonald's legacy, and our city will be all the better for it."

Age rule could make NYPD Blue a little grayer

The NYPD may soon allow new recruits as old as 48 to join the force under a new City Council bill pushed through on Thursday.

The proposed legislation, which will go to Mayor Mamdani's desk, raises the maximum age for a civil service exam from 35 to 43 years old.

It also allows veterans to sign up until the age of 48.

"We are desperate here," said Councilwoman Joann Ariola (R-Queens), one of the bill's co-sponsors.

"This city has made it so difficult to be a cop that people simply aren't signing up for the job anymore. If we want to keep our precincts staffed, we need to resort to desperate measures.

"Until we can change the anti-cop atmosphere we're living in, this is what we will have to do to attract new recruits to the force."

Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch has voiced support for the bill, but hasn't directly called for the change.

"The NYPD has already taken important steps to strengthen recruitment by reducing the college credit requirements to 24 credits, expanding the number of police officer examinations and making those examinations free to take," said Councilwoman Amanda Farias.

Craig McCarthy

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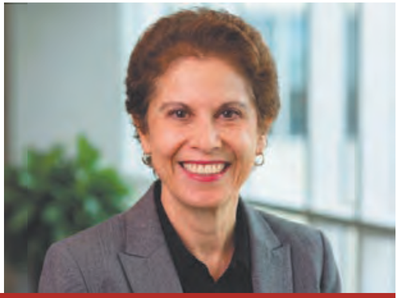
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Blanche & Jeff vics key

WASHINGTON — Retiring Sen. Thom Tillis declared Thursday that acting Attorney General Todd Blanche must meet with the victims of late sex predator Jeffrey Epstein in order to secure Tillis' support.

Tillis (R-NC), a key swing vote who could determine whether Blanche's nomination clears the Senate Judiciary Committee, indicated that he was heading toward voting "yes" on the second day of Blanche's confirmation hearing.

"I have a positive predisposition, just so that everybody knows. I have not made a final decision," Tillis explained. "But Mr. Blanche said very quickly yesterday that he would meet with the victims, the Epstein victims today, if it could be arranged.

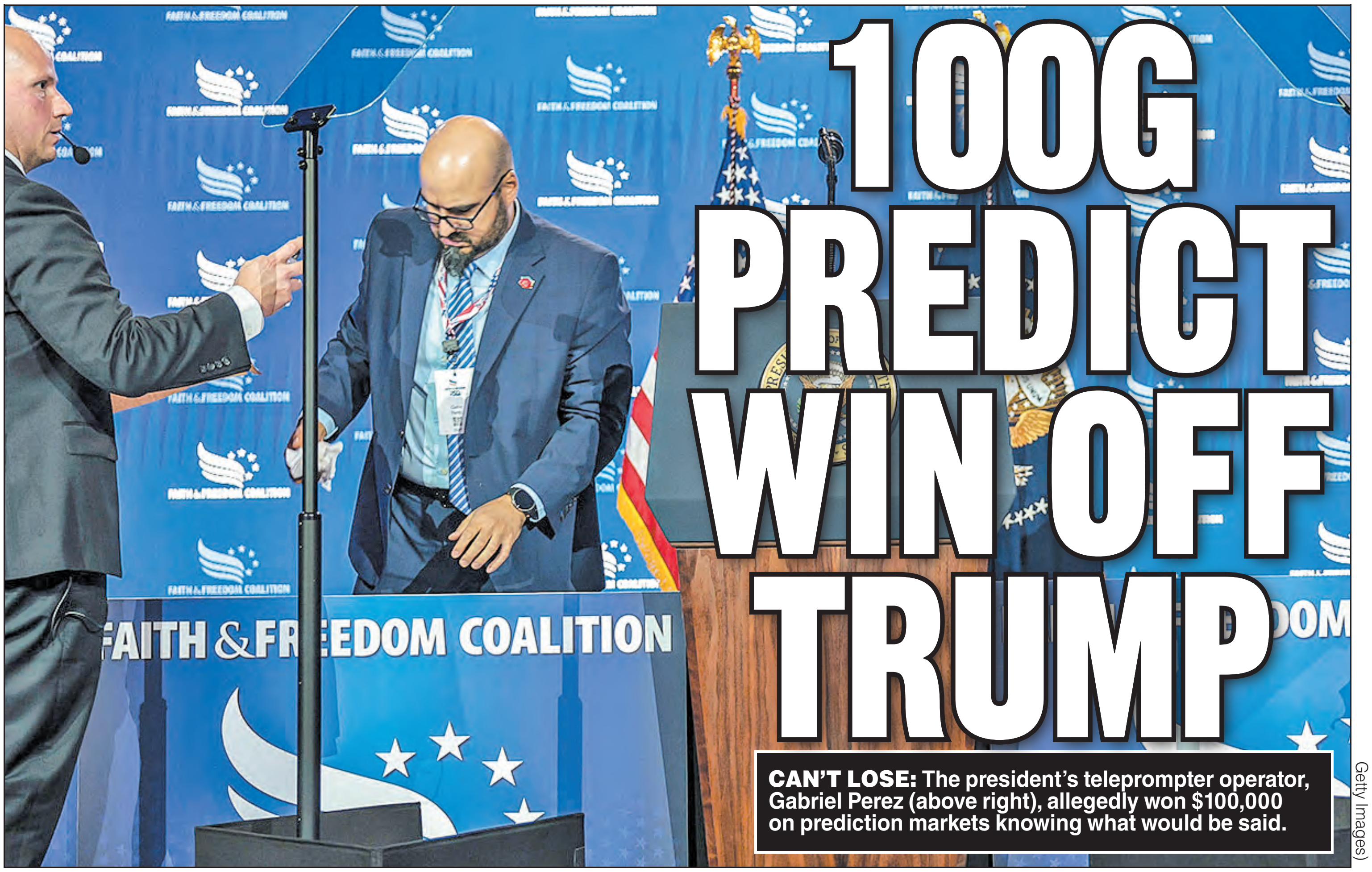
"Because it seemed to me that Mr. Blanche was willing to say that he would meet with them and counsel — I understand the restriction of the counsel has to be present — I expect that meeting to occur before I'm willing to vote out of this committee." Tillis noted that Blanche will have about two weeks to meet with the Epstein victims and secure his vote. "This is a very important part of getting to yes," he said. *Ryan King*

Brazil rebut over tariffs

Brazil's government convened top ministers on Thursday to prepare retaliatory measures against Washington's latest tariffs, with options including curbs on US audiovisual companies and suspension of pharmaceutical and agricultural patents, three sources told Reuters.

The measures under consideration are in line with Brazil's reciprocity law, which President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva pledged his government would invoke after the Trump administration announced a 25% tariff on many Brazilian products on Wednesday. *Reuters*

Don's teleprompter man in trouble



100G PREDICT WIN OFF TRUMP

CAN'T LOSE: The president's teleprompter operator, Gabriel Perez (above right), allegedly won $100,000 on prediction markets knowing what would be said.

(Getty Images)

By EMILY GOODIN

A longtime operator of President Trump's teleprompter has been placed on unpaid administrative leave after winning more than $100,000 on prediction market Kalshi based off the commander in chief's remarks.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Thursday that the operator, Gabriel Perez, would not be working the teleprompter for President Trump's address to the nation Thursday evening.

"They'll be on paid administrative leave," she said before correcting: "I'm sorry, without pay. The administrative leave is unpaid. To be very clear, that was a decision by the president."

Perez is speaking with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) to resolve allegations about bets he placed.

He placed money on whether Trump would use specific words or phrases or address certain topics in his remarks.

Perez did this for more than a dozen speeches, including February's State of the Union address, January's speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and a December prime-time ad-dress, ABC News reported.

He is "fully cooperating with the CFTC on the matter," a source familiar told The Post.

ABC News was first to report the investigation.

Perez made more than $90,000 in profits from his trades, but the money has been frozen, CNN reported.

Kalshi is known as a "mention market," where people can wager on words and expressions the president will or will not say during public events.

Prediction markets have found a huge audience in recent years, allowing people to bet on anything from what color tie the president will wear, to sports results. They've also been rife with instances of people using their insider knowledge to personally profit.

Prediction markets

US Army Master Sgt. Gannon Ken Van Dyke was charged in April 2026 with allegedly using classified, nonpublic information about the top-secret military raid on Venezuela to win approximately $409,000 in prediction-market bets.

He placed 13 bets totaling $33,000 on Polymarket between late December 2025 and early January 2026 about the operation that resulted in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Van Dyke has pleaded not guilty and is awaiting trial.

The case marked the first time the Justice Department filed insider-trading charges involving a prediction market. The CFTC also filed civil charges against Van Dyke.

Kalshi flagged the suspicious bets from Perez to the federal government.

"The Kalshi surveillance team promptly flagged, investigated and referred these trades to the CFTC," Robert DeNault, head of enforcement and legal counsel at Kalshi, wrote on social media.

"We have been assisting regulators on this matter and provided all evidence that we collected, as we do with any referral," he added.

A spokesperson for the CFTC declined to comment.

Perez is a longtime assistant to Trump and has operated the president's teleprompter since 2016.

Given his position, he was one of the last people to see Trump's speeches, getting a copy of the text to load in the prompter ahead of the president's delivery.

As a deputy assistant to the president, Perez was paid $175,000 a year, according to records.

Leavitt said Trump was unhappy with the matter. "He believes it is deeply unfortunate and, frankly, a disgrace," she said.

White House staffers, as government employees, face strict ethical guidelines when it comes to personally profiting from their positions. "There are very strict ethical guidelines here at the White House that explicitly state not to do this, and the White House Counsel's Office makes that clear to all of us who sign up to work in government on behalf of the president," Leavitt noted.

‘Nobody helped me out’

Bx. nurse recalls lying bloodied after assault

By GEORGETT ROBERTS
and JORGE FITZ-GIBBON

It’s every New Yorker’s worst nightmare.

A Bronx nurse recalled the harrowing moment he was shoved into a subway by a deranged stranger — who came out of nowhere and left him unconscious and bleeding on the platform — and how no one lifted a finger to help.

Josue Romano, 47, was waiting for a southbound D train at the Fordham Road station on June 27 when an unhinged attacker lunged at him and hurled him face-first into the side of an incoming train, leaving him with a concussion, he told The Post.

“But did anybody help me out? Nobody helped me out,” Romano said Thursday. “No, not even the conductor. There were people inside the train, and nobody came out to ask what happened to me. Nothing. Nothing.”

His attacker remains on the loose. The NYPD this week released blurry surveillance footage showing the still-unidentified suspect pacing around a subway car wearing a white undershirt and dark-colored pants.

‘Acting kind of funny’

Romano said he was waiting for his train to head downtown at around 2:20 p.m. when out of the corner of his eye he noticed the assailant and became alert.

“This man is acting kind of strange,” Romano said. “I believe he was on drugs or something, and then I see he goes into his duffel bag. I don’t know what he was looking for in the duffel bag. I said, ‘OK, let me keep my distance because he’s kind of acting kind of funny.’

ATTACKED: Josue Romano is still healing from the wounds he received after an unknown assailant slammed him into a subway car.

“But the man that was right behind me, so I said, ‘OK, let me just walk away, because of things that are going on in New York, there’s a lot of crazy things going on in New York.’ ”

Despite the precaution, and Romano moving away from the edge, the nut rushed at him.

“I glanced to the right and I see something white coming towards me,” he recalled. “It was real fast because when I glanced, it was already coming to me so I didn’t have time to react, to like kind of get out the way, and that’s when it happened. I got hit.

“He pushed me in the back right in train that was coming in.”

Romano suffered injuries to the face and mouth, collapsed onto the subway platform bloodied and unconscious, and was treated at St. Barnabas Hospital when help did arrive.

He said the incident has left him afraid to ride the rails — and skeptical of NYPD claims that the city transit system is safer than it’s been in months.

Doesn’t trust stats

Major crime in the city’s subway system was down by about 1% in June compared to last year, although felony assaults were up by 20 incidents in the month, according to NYPD stats.

“The statistics don’t mean anything,” Romano said. “I think what we see is what goes on and today is not the same as yesterday. The crime has grown more now than before.

“It’s just the crime is still growing and growing and growing no matter what the statistics say.”

Sally Brompton Daily Horoscope

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS AT SALLYBROMPTON.COM

♋ CANCER (June 22-July 23)
If you want something enough you will find a way to get it. As one of the zodiac's Cardinal signs you can be intensely ambitious and you will be aiming higher than ever over the next few days. The world is there to be enjoyed.

♌ LEO (July 24-Aug. 23)
Get out your brain broom and sweep away all the negative thoughts that have crept into your mind in recent weeks. You may be positive and optimistic by nature but it doesn't hurt to remind yourself occasionally just how special you are.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 24-Sept. 23)
Try to avoid saying anything hurtful today. You have a tendency to be overly critical if you feel that other people are not living up to the standards you expect of them - but if they did then you would not be so special, would you?

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 24-Oct. 23)
The more someone says you can believe them the more suspicious you should be. It may be in your nature to give others the benefit of the doubt but sometimes you cannot afford that luxury, so don't take what they tell you entirely on trust.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)
Express yourself forcefully today and don't worry that you might turn some people against you. The ones who are offended by what you have to say are most likely the ones who most need a wake-up call. Call it as you see it.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)
You may be reluctant to get tough with someone who is taking liberties but if you don't the situation could quickly spiral out of control. This is one of those situations where if you are lenient others will see it as a sign of weakness.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)
You need to get over the idea that there is a set way of doing things. Despite what you may have been told there is no stone tablet that says you must act as other people do. In fact, you would probably be wise to do the opposite.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)
If a friend or family member criticizes you unjustly today then let them know why you think they are wrong. On the other hand, if you look at what they say with an open mind you may see there is an element of truth in it.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)
Your mind will be moving on a higher and faster level today and over the weekend, but because Mercury is in its retrograde phase you will need to check everything it tells you. It's not only AI that has a tendency to hallucinate!

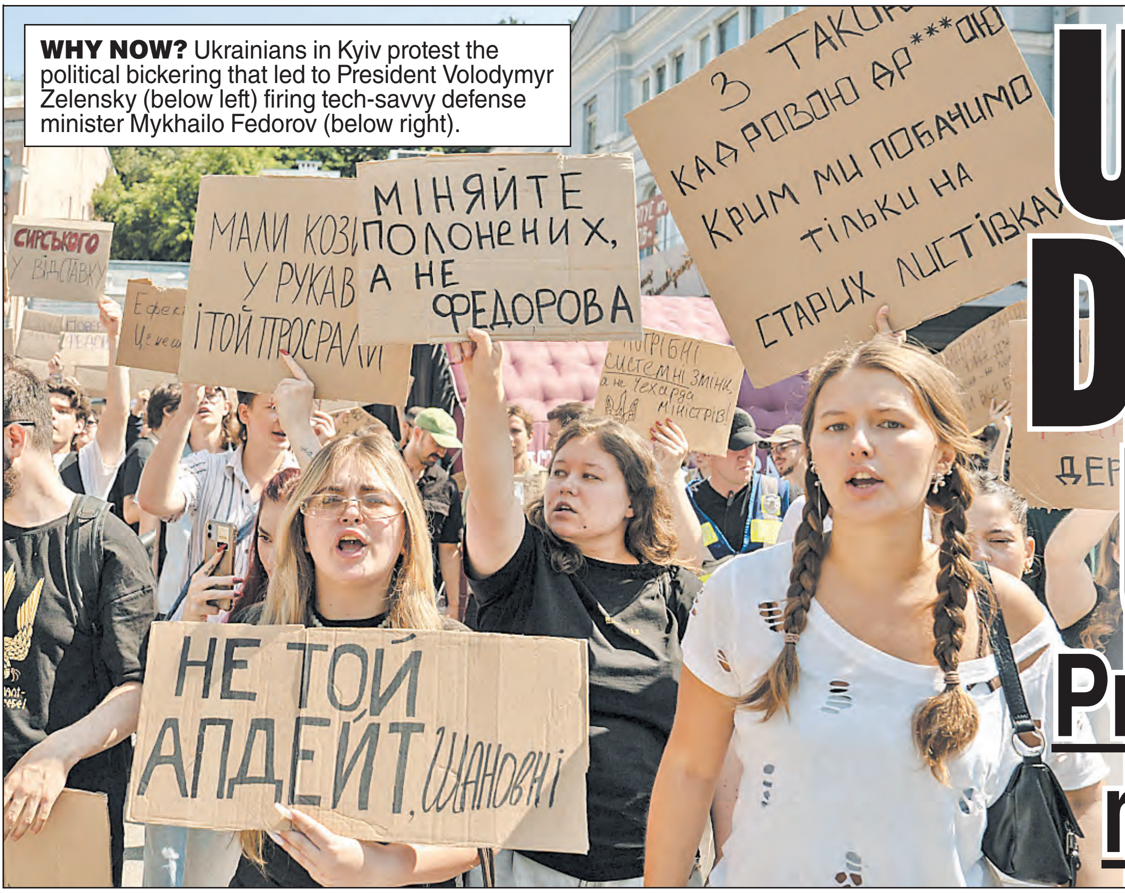
♈ ARIES (March 21-April 20)
A financial matter may be worrying you but the planets warn you are attaching too much importance to it and need to calm down. The weekend is almost here and you won't need lots of money to have fun. Being with friends will make you smile.

♉ TAURUS (April 21-May 21)
Is a relationship really in crisis or are you overreacting? According to the planets it is definitely the latter, so stand back from the situation and see it in a more positive light. You have been looking at it from too narrow a viewpoint.

♊ GEMINI (May 22-June 21)
The most important thing today is that you give yourself permission to take things easy so your mind and your body get a chance to recharge. You are such a livewire that sometimes you don't realize you have been running yourself into the ground.

BIRTHDAY FRIDAY

Put principle before profit in everything you do over the coming year. It may cost you a bit financially in the short-term but over a longer period of time it will pay off many times over. A clear conscience alone is a prize beyond price.



WHY NOW? Ukrainians in Kyiv protest the political bickering that led to President Volodymyr Zelensky (below left) firing tech-savvy defense minister Mykhailo Fedorov (below right).

Patryk Jaracz/SOPA Images/Shutterstock

UKRAINE DEFENSE UPROAR

Protests over Zel's military shake-up

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
and RONNY REYES

Protests broke out across Ukraine Thursday after President Volodymyr Zelensky fired his defense minister to allegedly appease his top military general, with troops warning that the political spat could spell doom on the front lines.

Zelensky's Wednesday night decision to fire the tech-savvy Mykhailo Fedorov, 35, resulted in demonstrations across the country and even the resignation of a senior air force commander.

While he was only appointed in January, Fedorov has been credited for accelerating the Ukrainian drone program, which has decimated Russia's forces and kept the invading army largely at bay in 2026.

Fedorov lamented the fallout and claimed that long-time Zelensky ally and Ukraine's top general Oleksandr Syrskyi gave the president an ultimatum to either fire the defense minister or he would walk out.

Split decision

"Instead of figuring out how to asymmetrically overpower Russia, which is [Syrskyi's] task, he figured out how to split the country, where we are today," Fedorov told reporters.

Fedorov, however, said his push for advances in Ukraine's military was repeatedly met with resistance from Syrskyi, with the bickering leading both men to repeatedly ask Zelensky to fire the other.

The ousted defense chief maintains that he has respect for Syrskyi for his accomplishments in the earlier years of the war but said the general remains trapped in the past and is not thinking about the best way for Ukraine to move forward.

Outrage on Kyiv streets

"The war has changed completely. Drones are changing everything, completely reshaping the architecture, because some new drone features appear at least four times a year, and 20-30 things are changing in the technologies per year," Fedorov said.

"The management system has changed, and we need to change with it."

Zelensky defended his decision to keep Syrskyi over Fedorov, admitting the men's personal relationship caused Wednesday's government restructuring.

"I would very much like to see unity. The sides have not found it," Zelensky told reporters.

The choice led to outrage in the streets of Kyiv, with protesters condemning the infighting in the government at a time of war, with some even demanding Syrskyi leave office as well.

Lt. Col. Denis Yaroslavsky, who commands Ukrainian assault forces, told The Post the fallout has been disheartening and serves as a major blow to the country's military.

In Yaroslavsky's eyes, Fedorov had the technological experience and creativity to capitalize on Ukraine's latest victories, with Syrskyi holding the experience and leadership capabilities to see those plans through.

With Fedorov gone, Zelensky moved to appoint Yevhenii Khmara, acting head of Ukraine's SBU domestic security service, as acting defense minister.

Lemonade 'King,' 17, killed

A 17-year-old CEO who heralded himself as the "King of Lemonade" was shot dead as he was driving around a residential neighborhood in Virginia — weeks after he graduated from high school.

Aubrie "Breezzy" Greene, the founder of Breezzy's Lemonade, was identified as the victim found suffering from a gunshot wound when police responded to a car crash in the yard of a Richmond, Va., home just before 5 p.m. on July 5, WTVR reported.

Greene crashed into the shed of the home after being shot and succumbed to his injuries days later, the outlet reported.

Greene's mother announced the entrepreneur's death over his company's Instagram account on Wednesday. "We never imagined Breezzy not being here with us," Ceydria McCray wrote in a tribute.

Greene began his lemonade business in 2019, when he was 11 years old.

The teen graduated from Richmond Public School's Huguenot High School on May 26. No arrests have been made.

Nicholas McEntyre

Add 1 to monkey barrel

Scientists have identified a new species of monkey in Democratic Republic of Congo's rainforest, distinguished by patches of light-colored skin around its mouth, Florida Atlantic University said in a statement.

The discovery marks only the fifth new monkey species identified in Africa in the last 75 years, according to the statement issued on Wednesday.

The species was named *Colobus congoensis* by scientists.

Small in size, the black monkey has a distinctive "mask-like appearance" with a vivid orange-cream patch surrounding its mouth and nose. *Reuters*

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Hotel Horrors

Another sign of Zo's encampment idiocy

Brian Zak/NY Post

Faded glory: The empty Roosevelt Hotel occupies a full Midtown block.

NICOLE GELINAS

THE burgeoning encampment along Manhattan's West Side has become a symbol of Mayor Mamdani's wrong-headed homelessness policies — and nine blocks east, a mini-Skid Row in Midtown is sad evidence of his economic neglect.

Under the scaffold surrounding the shuttered Roosevelt Hotel, on a prime block just steps from Grand Central Terminal, two or more homeless people have taken up residence this month, storing their belongings — dozens of stuffed-full garbage bags and two shopping trolleys — along the facade. Neighbors have made at least 14 calls about the encampment to 311 since early July.

Fred Cerullo, president of the Grand Central Partnership, said the repeated attempts at agency outreach have had no effect. "None of this shows compassion for the individuals who are clearly in need of assistance," Cerullo told me, "and it also creates a quality-of-life nightmare."

It's a blight on an economically booming neighborhood — and it highlights the beautiful old building's needlessly sorry state.

The Roosevelt, built in 1924, is a classic railway hotel. The 19-story edifice, spanning a city block, is part of the original Terminal City, the mini-metropolis built around Grand Central a century ago to serve commuters and long-distance travelers.

As the real-estate plots around it become a mono-crop of glass towers, the Roosevelt's crisp stone window borders, neat brickwork and mock-serious statuary flourishes are even more unique, and thus more valuable.

It holds a special place in entertainment and political lore: Guy Lombardo's orchestra called it home for three decades, New York Gov. Thomas Dewey crowed "victory" over President Harry Truman there, and it's featured in classic movies like "The French Connection." Yet the city is letting it molder.

To see how a well-run old hotel can fit into a modern urban environment, consider Chicago. Its downtown Palmer House is a similar stone-and-brick complement to the glass towers that now surround it.

Like the Roosevelt, the Palmer shut down for more than a year during the COVID-19 pandemic — but it used that time to renovate. The bet paid off: Its 1,641 rooms were sold out through the July 4th weekend, with hundreds of visitors eating and drinking in the huge lobby restaurant.

The activity creates a positive effect on surrounding streets, adding thousands more people to the neighborhood each week with money to spend. That's a depressing contrast to the Roosevelt, which the city has abused since the hotel's own pandemic closure.

In 2023, Mayor Eric Adams signed a contract with the hotel's owner, state-owned Pakistan International Airlines, to use its 1,025 rooms as a migrant shelter. Since that deal ended last year, the Roosevelt has remained empty.

It's now surrounded by scaffolding, festooned here and there with World Cup flags. The building's east side, fronting on Vanderbilt Avenue, has been scrawled in graffiti for years.

The hotel has 79 active violations with the city's Buildings Department and owes a quarter-million dollars in fines. It's not landmarked, despite several attempts — and although the Trump administration has touted a mysterious redevelopment agreement with Pakistan, its future remains uncertain.

After such willful neglect, it's no surprise that vagrants are drifting in. The best way to crowd out anti-social uses is with *social* uses — that is, by getting this historic building back into circulation, pronto.

It needs renovations, true, but a bunch of key interests can align here. First, basic economics: Gotham *needs* more hotels, particularly in core Manhattan.

The city has boasted the highest occupancy rate of all of this year's World Cup cities — often above 90% — and even before that, rates were breaking records. The Roosevelt still maintains some retail tenants, from a pizza store to clothiers, showing how stubbornly NYC wants to thrive.

Then, union voters: The revenues possible in core Manhattan would make it possible to keep running the Roosevelt as a union hotel, especially if a giant such as Hilton or Marriott were to run it. Satisfying unions is another key Mamdani interest.

And it will please preservationists. "The Roosevelt Hotel is an elegant and urbane building by noted architect George B. Post" — he built the original New York Stock Exchange — "that deserves landmark status," says Peg Breen, president of the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

Mamdani still hasn't figured out how to put his Economic Development Corporation to use — apart from handling his city-funded grocery-store boondoggle. Making a Roosevelt deal that satisfies the owner, the hotel union and nearby businesses would be a worthy project.

THE WEEK IN WHOPPERS

A diary of disinformation and the delusional

THIS QUESTION

"Do police really need to use guns?"

—US Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed, Tuesday

We say: You may think disarming cops is nutty, but then, this Michigan Democrat believes we don't need police at all. Hmm: His state has averaged about 500 murders a year. Does he think that number would *fall* if we #Defund or #Disarm cops? In New York City, *dozens* of officers have been shot these past 10 years. Imagine if they had no guns to defend themselves.

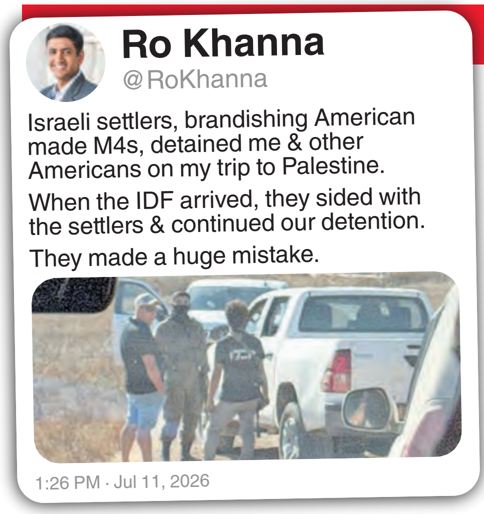
THIS OBSERVATION

"The vast majority of pregnancies have been in women."

—UC San Francisco Chancellor Dr. Sam Hawgood, Tuesday

We say: Thank you for that concession, Dr. Hawgood, a neonatologist whose school's classroom guide urges use of the term "pregnant people." Asked at a congressional hearing if any *non-biological woman* has ever had a baby, he countered: "A transgender person can." Sorry, as Rep. Mary Miller (R-Ill.) noted, a "transgender person" is not a non-biological woman.

THIS CHARGE



Ro Khanna
@RoKhanna

Israeli settlers, brandishing American made M4s, detained me & other Americans on my trip to Palestine.

When the IDF arrived, they sided with the settlers & continued our detention.

They made a huge mistake.

1:26 PM · Jul 11, 2026

We say: What BS: A security team *briefly* stopped Khanna and his crew from entering a restricted area. He was *never* "detained," but free at all times to turn around. And when IDF soldiers arrived to sort out the issue, they called police, who then let Khanna's van proceed. (Oh, and for the record, the US congressman should know that — per official US policy — there is actually no such place as "Palestine.")

THIS COMMENT

"[Watching the LA Sparks gives people] a sense of their value . . . and what they have a right to expect from this world."

—Ex-Vice President Kamala Harris, speaking to the WNBA team Sunday

We say: Another day, another mouthful of gibberish from the ex-veep. How on Earth does watching a woman's pro hoops game give viewers a profound "sense" of anything? — *Compiled by The Post Editorial Board*

NEW YORK POST
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Quit It, JD

Vice President JD Vance needs to get his head out of the conspiratorial "rabbit holes" he says he loves to explore and drop the bizarro line he just pitched to Joe Rogan that the Israelis blew up the Iran peace deal because they want "to keep the war going on indefinitely."

It was Iran that broke the 60-day "comprehensive cease-fire" established by the Memorandum of Understanding by attacking ships in the Strait of Hormuz, period.

Before the ink was dry on the MOU, which guaranteed open passage through the Strait, Iran's Revolutionary Guard asserted Tehran's control and ownership of the waterway and warned that merchant ships must obtain its OK to transit; then it started firing on vessels that didn't comply. *That* reopened the war, and Israel had nothing to do with it.

It's also preposterous to charge that Jerusalem wants the war to drag on "indefinitely"; it's *always* been clear about its objectives on Iran: destroy its nuclear capability, eviscerate its conventional-war machine; if possible, foster the end of the regime.

Yes, Israel hated the MOU, which was drawn up completely without its involvement — and so left it no way to undermine it, except insofar as Iran claimed that Israeli self-defense against Hezbollah's attacks from Lebanon somehow broke the truce.

And even then, Jerusalem *yielded* to President Trump's demands that it back off in Lebanon.

Vance went to other ugly places in his chat with Rogan: pretending that an open Israel-funded PR effort to counter antisemitism among younger conservatives somehow is actually a secret drive to undo peace with Iran and smear him; suggesting that the craziest Jeffrey Epstein conspiracy theories are true and Israel is part of the plot.

Maybe he wanted to deflect responsibility for the failure of an MOU he helped negotiate; maybe he resents how Trump opted for a war he likely opposed and then stuck him with trying to negotiate an exit.

Whatever: Pitching conspiracy theories, especially ones that flirt with rank antisemitism, is the wrong way out of your dilemma, JD. As big as the Republican tent can be, it has absolutely no room for this.

Zo Stands Up for (Some) Good Schools

Here's one small cheer for Mayor Mamdani, as he declined to fall for the annual, ritualized outrage over admissions to the city's top public high schools.

He even pointed toward the *correct* fix: If you want more black and Hispanic kids to score well enough to win entry into Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and so on, do far better at teaching those children in earlier grades.

The left-leaning online news outlet Gothamist got this year's ball rolling by screaming, "Just 3 Black students admitted to NYC's elite Stuyvesant High School," eliding the key fact that the unhappy number is the result of a *race-blind* test.

Critics always fall back on charging that the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test is somehow racist; far-left City Councilman Lincoln Restler tweeted the usual dodge: Scrap the SHSAT because "a single test should never be [the] only factor deciding who gets in & who doesn't."

Why not? Point out the racist questions, Lincoln: Are they in the room with you now?

The "it's racism!" crowd never explains why the white supremacists with such power in New York *don't* penalize the low-income Asian-American students who score big and so win entrance in good numbers.

The real blame should focus on to the dysfunctional public-schools blob that has "normalized" failure for tens of thousands of kids; unions and a bureaucracy that line their own nests exclusively — and despise the public charter schools that *do* educate the minorities the left claims to care about.

On the national "gold standard" NAEP exams, citywide fourth-grade reading-proficiency stands at 28%, math at 33%. But black and Hispanic students have proficiency rates less than a third of white and Asian ones.

Mamdani's shown zero appetite for taking on the interests that make the regular public schools such failure factories, but he *could* expand Gifted & Talented programs in minority 'hoods, and create more elite high school seats (or even more elite schools!) to increase opportunity. Go for it, Mr. Mayor: We'd love to have at least *one* area where we can keep on praising you.

Legal Pot's Tiniest Victims

Skyrocketing child ER admissions for marijuana poisoning are the latest sign of how poorly then-Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the Legislature's leaders thought through pot legalization.

The state Department of Health reports that cannabis-poisoning-related emergency-room visits have doubled, from roughly 1,200 in 2016 to nearly 2,400 in 2024. And the rise in ER admits was over 1,600% for toddlers, as pot-poisoning (i.e., edibles and candies) incidents exceeded those involving Tylenol, aspirin and other painkillers combined.

The DOH also found that 16% of teens who regularly use cannabis will develop Cannabis Use Disorder compared to about 10% of people who only start using as adults.

National studies show that states with legalized pot have seen spikes in psychotic and bipolar disorders among young adults.

All these issues got ignored in the rush to decriminalize marijuana and legalizing commercial sales.

To be fair: A lot of us didn't expect pot legalization to come with so many unintended consequences. But that doesn't excuse New York's leader from facing the facts, even if it means rethinking legalization altogether.

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letters@nypost.com

Hochul's Data-Center Ban Will Cost New York Big

THE ISSUE: Gov. Hochul's one-year (for now) ban on building new large-scale data centers in New York.

•Once again, New York loses out by "pausing" the construction of data centers for one year ("Kathy's A.I. K.O.," July 15).

It's really no surprise though, just a string of poor decisions made to appease the overeducated "wokesters" that dominate this state. Think of all the jobs that we are losing out on. Think of the businesses that will migrate to friendlier states.

Bill Isler, Floral Park

•Data centers are money makers and develop jobs, but Gov. Hochul says she's banning them because they strain the energy grid. Huh? Then why is she banning gas appliances and gas heat? Gas supply is abundant, electric not so much. But when have we ever expected Hochul to be rational?

Rob Feuerstein
Staten Island

•Pausing state permits for new large data centers for up to one year is a short-sighted response to a real challenge.

Huge facilities can strain electric grids, water supplies and local infrastructure, and New York is right to ensure ordinary ratepayers don't subsidize corporate power use. But the answer is to make developers bear those costs — not to suspend projects indiscriminately and risk the state's economic and technological future.

We do not have an AI crisis. We have an Albany energy-policy crisis.

Todd Pittinsky
Port Jefferson

Gov. Hochul

•Under the governor's incoherent energy policies, New York has leaned too hard on wind, solar and outdated nuclear plans while keeping rules and mandates that discourage natural-gas plants. The result is a mismatch: Electricity demand is rising, but new dependable supply is not arriving fast enough.

Hochul's temporary ban on critical data centers is nothing more than an attempt to conceal her incompetence and failures to deliver reliable energy for New York.

Michael Mulhall
Moseley, Va.

•The governor's short-sighted decision to "study" the impacts of AI data centers for a year before deciding on what New York will do in this space is just another capitulation to the extremists in her party.

This decision will just further alienate private-sector companies from coming to New York and incentivize those that are still here to leave.

Peter Kelly, Hazlet, NJ

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The Horses Are Not the Issue

THE ISSUE: The family of a tourist killed in a horse-carriage accident calls on the city to end the industry.

•It is sad that an accident by a horse-drawn carriage caused the accidental death of a teenage tourist ("'Let his death not be in vain,'" July 16).

But the number of horse-carriage accidents is dwarfed by the number of accidents involving motorized vehicles in New York City. We are much safer in the carriages.

Lydia DiBello
Bay Ridge

•Any death is sad, but it strikes me as ironic that Deepak Mahajan said his son's death would not have happened had there been a ban on carriage horses. Why did he take his family on the carriage ride if he felt unsafe? Why did the driver leave the carriage to take the picture?

Rules are in place to keep horses and riders safe. The carriage driver has culpability for leaving the carriage unattended to take the picture.

That being said, the horse-drawn carriage industry should not be banned but rather there should be tighter enforcement of the safety rules.

Joanne Skibicki
Manhattan

•There is a fanatical element among those who want to ban horse carriages. This rush to judgement is preventing a full investigation.

A police detail should be assigned to protect the horses, the drivers and therefore the public.

Diane Moriarty
Manhattan

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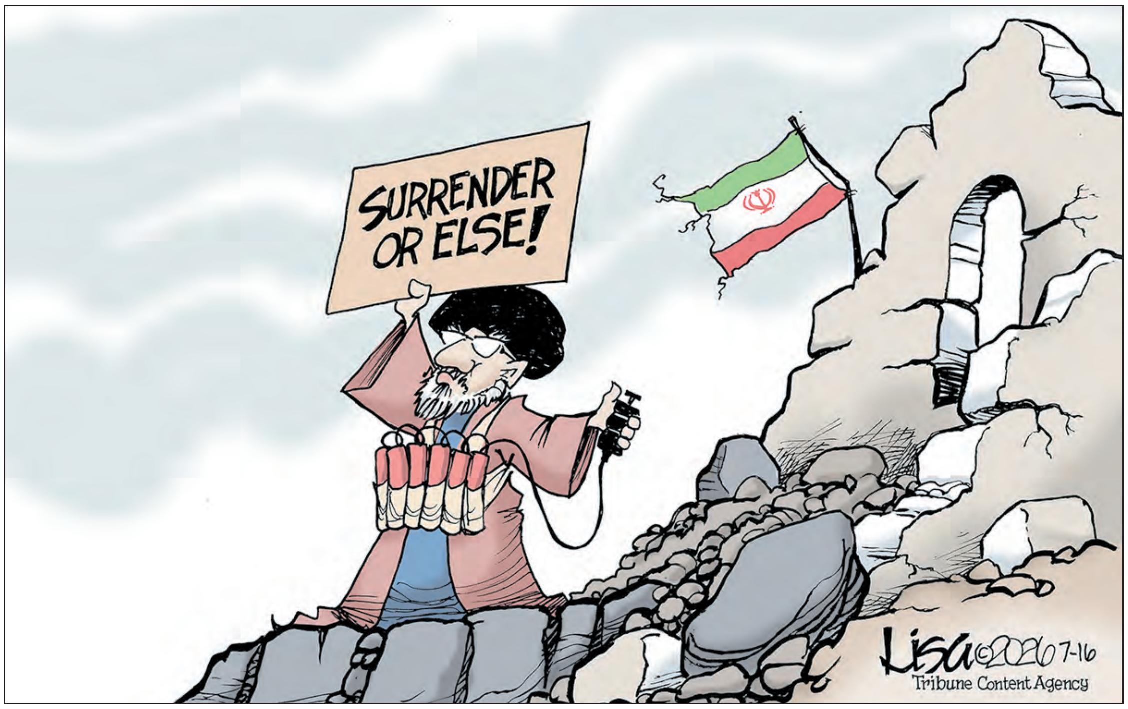

Tribune Content Agency

Dems' Socialist Rift

RICH LOWRY

WHAT did the country ever do to white college graduates to make them feel so disaffected from its economic and political system?

The wave of socialist victories in Democratic Party primaries is being driven by well-educated white voters who are more extreme than the rest of the Democratic coalition. The latest evidence is a new poll in the closely watched Democratic primary for a Senate seat in Michigan.

The AOC-endorsed, Israel-hating insurgent, Abdul El-Sayed, has had momentum, but is now narrowly trailing the establishment candidate, Haley Stevens. According to a Detroit News survey, Stevens is ahead by about seven percentage points, with demographic advantages that are very telling.

Stevens, a goofy white lady, leads El-Sayed by a 3-to-1 margin among black voters. On the other hand, El-Sayed, a person of color fully vested in the left's Third Worldist agenda, leads among white voters, 51% to 39%.

Stevens, a career apparatchik and politician, leads among non-college-educated voters, 56%-34% — whereas El-Sayed, who has been endorsed by the Working Families Party, is ahead with college-educated voters, 48%-41%.

The respective strengths of the two candidates run against the grain of what you might expect in a race between a conventional Democrat and a radical, yet accord with what we've seen in campaign after campaign.

Socialists may imagine themselves the champions of people of color and of workers, but their movement is, by and large, most attractive to Caucasian associate professors of sociology who think they haven't achieved the station in life that they deserve. It's less a proletarian phenomenon than a project of frustrated PhD candidates and medium-grade professionals.

Because many socialist candidates have immigrant backgrounds, it can be tempting to consider the movement as fundamentally a function of immigration, when that's not true. A 2021 survey of DSA members found that they were disproportionately white, at 85%, and disproportionately had college degrees (80%) or a higher degree (35%).

This leaves them in a similar predicament as the pioneering communists and socialists in Europe, who talked up the prospect of a worker revolution — then looked around the room and saw no workers, only intellectuals and activists like themselves.

The good news for DSA-aligned candidates is that college-educated white people are very reliable voters who can make a big difference in the kind of low-turnout primaries where anti-establishment, left-wing candidates thrive.

A recent analysis in The New York Times noted that Zohran Mamdani-endorsed socialist Darializa Avila Chevalier defeated Rep. Adriano Espaillat in a marquee New York City congressional primary while winning high education and higher-income areas. Espaillat, in contrast, won in majority-Hispanic and lower-income areas.

Another Mamdani pick, Brad Lander, similarly cleaned up in high-income and high-education areas while crushing Rep. Dan Goldman, whose strong performance in low-income parts of the district didn't save him.

Socialistic economics may have appeal to working-class voters in theory, but the DSA couples its economics with extreme views on cultural issues that have very little appeal to non-college-educated voters.

Tax the rich? Sure. Transcend the gender binary? No, thanks — whatever that means.

That the average black Democrat is more moderate and pragmatic than the average white Democrat may prove the ultimate check on whether an AOC-type candidate can claim the big prize of the Democratic presidential nomination in 2028.

It's one thing to appeal to the so-called Commie Belt in New York City, the young, highly educated, diverse neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn that so strongly backed Mamdani; it's quite another to win over the older, religious African-American voters in, say, South Carolina's I-95 Black Belt.

In the 2020 primaries, Bernie Sanders ran a campaign of great verve and ideological energy, while Joe Biden stumbled from one early setback to another — yet black Democrats decided that the former vice president was the safer choice, and that was the end of Sanders.

In short, the workers of the world may one day unite, but not behind a socialist vessel for the grievances of ideologically exotic, college-educated white people.

Hospitals Transed A *Lot* More Kids

DR. STANLEY GOLDFARB

THE child sex-change craze is worse than almost anyone realizes — and a Colorado hospital just proved it. Recently released court documents show that Children's Hospital Colorado, affiliated with the University of Colorado School of Medicine, prescribed puberty blockers to more than 250 patients and cross-sex hormones to nearly 550 patients in a single year, 2025. Those are shockingly high numbers — at least 5 to 10 times higher than previously thought.

My organization, Do No Harm, had already analyzed insurance data for this hospital. We found that between 2019 and 2023, Children's Hospital Colorado provided just over 100 children with sex-change treatments, including puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and even surgeries.

Those treatments already made this hospital one of the worst abusers of vulnerable and confused children in the country. But the numbers seen in 2025 are far higher.

In that single year, the hospital gave puberty blockers to *twice* as many patients as we documented over five full years, hurting far more kids than we thought possible.

Not all these treatments are for different patients; many kids get multiple medical interventions. They may start with puberty blockers to stop their natural development, continue with cross-sex hormones to change their appearance, and undergo sex-change surgeries as a last step.

Regardless, the court filings prove that Children's Hospital Colorado is giving invasive and irreversible treatments to mind-boggling numbers of children. Is this single facility an exception? Probably not.

At Do No Harm, our insurance-claim analyses documented nearly 14,000 sex-change treatments at children's hospitals and other facilities between 2019 and 2023.

> ***The very idea of a child sex change ought to be unthinkable.***

But not all claims were detectable, and we don't know how many treatments were paid for out of pocket. Plus, we know for a fact that some facilities deliberately hide this information via alternate diagnosis codes — perhaps to avoid blowback for basically experimenting on vulnerable kids.

In light of what's happening in Colorado, we think it's fair to estimate that between 20,000 and 25,000 American kids got sex-change treatments in recent years.

Think about that: Tens of thousands of children have been pumped full of dangerous chemicals to try to become something they aren't. Tens of thousands of children have little chance, if any, of returning to who they really are.

The situation in Colorado is grim enough — but the facts coming out of Oregon are even worse. A study published in May analyzed the data on Oregon children, ages 8 to 17, who paid for sex-change treatments with insurance, using a database that includes about 80% of insured Oregonians.

The topline finding is terrifying: Between 2016 and 2023, more than 1 out of every 250 biological girls by age 17 took male hormones, while about 1 in 630 biological boys took female hormones by the same age.

All told, about 1 out of every 100 Oregon children covered by insurance was formally diagnosed with gender dysphoria during that eight-year span. That's not some fringe phenomenon. It is mainstream.

But we may be turning a corner. Over the past few years, Republican-led states and President Trump's administration have seriously cracked down on child sex changes.

Many states have banned treatments altogether, and a Trump executive order has opened the door to federal investigations and lawsuits against medical providers that harm kids. In response, a growing number of children's hospitals have stopped providing sex-change treatments, including Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC.

That's cause for celebration, but there's more work to be done. Vulnerable and confused kids will be at risk so long as sex-change treatments for minors are legal anywhere. The White House and Congress should immediately push for a ban on child surgeries.

Ultimately, America needs a national ban on puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones, too. The Chloe Cole Act, which Congress is debating this week, would do just that.

It's now clear that hundreds upon hundreds of children were subjected to dangerous treatments in a single Colorado hospital in a single year — to say nothing of other years, and other hospitals across the nation. It's not just a shock. It's unconscionable — and a painful reminder that child sex changes are far more common than most people think.

The very idea of a child sex change ought to be unthinkable. It's time to make them impossible.

Stanley Goldfarb, MD, is chairman at Do No Harm.

NEW YORK POST
Yankees
AMED ROSARIO

Amed
UT
ROSARIO
14

Charles Wenzelberg / New York Post

2026 Yankee POSTER SERIES

Throughout this season, The Post & Montefiore Einstein will be running posters of your favorite Yankees in the center of the paper. Check each week to see who's next!

Two legendary
New York institutions.
One team.

Montefiore Einstein
Official Hospital of the New York Yankees

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The Post Puzzle Page

SCRABBLE GRAMS

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O_1 O_1 O_1 N_1 N_1 S_1 M_3 — 1st Letter Double — RACK 1

A_1 E_1 I_1 V_4 H_4 R_1 C_3 — Triple Word Score — RACK 2

A_1 A_1 I_1 T_1 F_4 T_1 N_1 — RACK 3

A_1 E_1 O_1 U_1 T_1 T_1 D_2 — RACK 4

PAR SCORE 190-200
BEST SCORE 275

FOUR RACK TOTAL ____
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

TODAY'S ANSWER

SCRABBLE GRAMS SOLUTION

M_3 O_1 N_1 S_1 O_1 O_1 N_1 — RACK 1 = 62

A_1 R_1 C_3 H_4 I_1 V_4 E_1 — RACK 2 = 95

A_1 N_1 T_1 I_1 F_4 A_1 T_1 — RACK 3 = 60

O_1 U_1 T_1 D_2 A_1 T_1 E_1 — RACK 4 = 58

PAR SCORE 190-200 — TOTAL 275

Directions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word using scoring directions at right. 7 Letter words get 50 point bonus. "Blank" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE players Dictionary, 4th Edition.

Bridge

North dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ A Q J 4
♡ Q 7
◇ K 6
♣ J 6 5 4 2

WEST
♠ 5
♡ J 10 9 6
◇ Q J 10 4 2
♣ Q 10 8

EAST
♠ 8 3
♡ K 8 5 4 2
◇ A 9 8 7
♣ 9 3

SOUTH
♠ K 10 9 7 6 2
♡ A 3
◇ 5 3
♣ A K 7

North	East	South	West
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All Pass

Opening lead – ◇ Q

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Cy the Cynic constantly struggles with his weight.

"How are you doing these days?" I asked Cy. "Making ends meet?"

"If you mean can I touch my toes with my fingers," the Cynic said, "no."

Cy has had trouble making ends meet in his penny game lately. When he was declarer at today's four spades, West led the queen of diamonds: king, ace. West won the diamond return and shifted to the jack of hearts: queen, king, ace. Cy drew trumps and cashed the A-K of clubs, but when the queen didn't fall, he lost a club and a heart.

"Unlucky to go down," Cy said.

A good way to make ends meet is not to put your foot in your mouth, but that's what Cy did. Four spades was cold. When West leads the jack of hearts at Trick Three, Cy must play low from dummy; West won't be leading from the king.

Cy takes the ace, draws trumps and takes the top clubs. East-West play low, but then Cy exits with a heart. When East wins, he must lead a red card, conceding a fatal ruff-sluff.

Word Force

ILLEGALIZED

From the word or phrase above, form **AT LEAST 15** five-letter words, without using more than one form of the same word. For example, drink or drank (not both).

ANSWERS IN TOMORROW'S POST
Yesterday's word:
VENOGRAM

among
anger
argon
gamer
gnome
goner
grave
groan
grove
mange
mango
manor
maven
mover
omega
organ
ramen
range
raven
venom

Wonderword

How to play: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **Circle their letters only. Do not circle the word.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

INBAR LAVI (ACTRESS) — **Solution: 12 letters**

T	B	S	L	I	L	L	I	T	H	A	L	A	N	A
S	S	L	A	O	V	N	E	V	E	C	N	A	D	N
U	O	D	R	V	A	A	A	R	T	I	S	T	O	R
D	N	I	E	H	I	T	L	A	I	N	O	S	A	A
E	S	M	S	Y	H	B	R	A	V	O	I	C	A	L
T	O	P	A	G	O	I	K	A	E	R	B	V	U	E
A	F	O	I	X	K	L	L	D	P	E	I	C	M	B
L	A	S	T	S	H	I	P	E	I	V	I	M	A	A
E	N	T	A	V	A	J	M	M	A	F	A	U	H	D
R	A	E	M	C	E	O	I	R	E	R	U	S	S	O
G	R	R	E	N	S	E	A	R	I	R	S	H	A	T
N	C	S	N	N	M	I	M	O	D	N	E	I	R	S
A	H	A	I	P	L	A	I	N	D	B	B	D	C	E
G	Y	W	C	A	M	E	O	F	A	U	D	A	N	N
N	D	N	A	C	C	O	R	O	M	L	I	F	R	U

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Abelar, Alana, Artist, Bau, Bivas, Bravo, Break, Cameo, Cinema, Crash, CSI, Dance, Dotsen, Dust, Emma, Eve, Fauda, Film, Gang Related, Imposters, Inbar, Israeli, Jenna, Last Ship, Lavi, Lillith, Lori, Lucifer, Maddie, Max, Miami, Moroccan, Plain, Prison, Raviva, Russo, Shani, Sheba, Sight, Sonia, Sons of Anarchy, Underemployed, Vee, Veronica, Winsome

Yesterday's Answer: Clown

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

POST SU DOKU

To solve a Su Doku, you must put a number from 1 to 9, in each empty box.

Each number must appear once in each horizontal row, as well as in each vertical column and in each of the 3-by-3 grids. Impossible? Not once you get the hang of it. Tips and in depth strategies at ***www.SudokuWiki.org***

PLAY MORE GAMES!
NYPOST.COM/GAMES

Solutions on Page 41

© Syndicated Puzzles

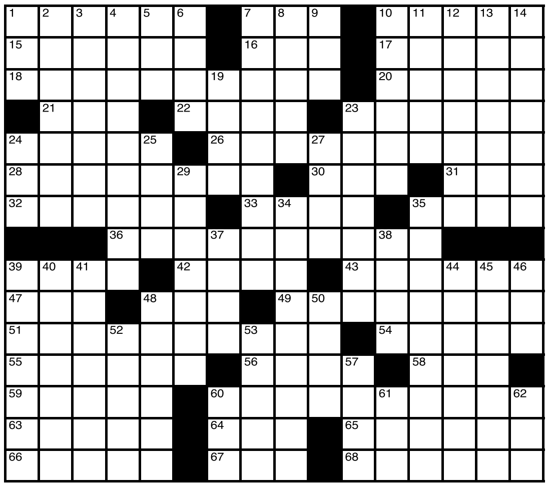
Very Easy #7,342

		1	8		6	4		9
					4			
9	5				2	3	8	6
5				6			4	
7		3				9		1
	4			8				2
8	1	2	5				3	7
			2					
3		7	6		8	5		

Difficult #7,132

	4	5					2	
9	1		6		4		8	
				7	9			
7								3
			2	8				
	5		4		7		9	1
		2					4	
			3					

Quick Crossword



Across
1 Agreeing (with)
7 Unleash (on)
10 Chemically quiet
15 Rocker Dee
16 "Industry" network
17 Levi's Stadium player
18 Vague advice for space travelers worried about black holes?
20 Prickly plants
21 Green prefix
22 Folk icon Joan
23 Washed-out
24 Espresso froth
26 Air travel that's the fifth-best option?
28 Element of many English breakfast blends
30 Sci-fi beings
31 Vehicle with sliding doors
32 Waver
33 Group of badgers
35 Part of R&R
36 "My job is ranking people on a scale of 'miffed' to 'downright furious'"?
39 Catchall gp.
42 Bad-mouth
43 "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" singer
47 Sun Devils sch.
48 Snag
49 Treble-makers?
51 Juliet's response when her love asks what city is as eternal as their bond?
54 Colorful South Asian dresses
55 Running groups?
56 Aphrodite's son
58 Thai neighbor
59 Places for soaks
60 Helpful draw when trying to play a Q word in Scrabble?
63 Pair of hearts?
64 Enthusiast
65 Tickled
66 Show emotion
67 Estadio cheer
68 Most easygoing

Down
1 Org. with a "Get Ready for Baby" page
2 Multiplication, to division
3 Bishop's domain
4 Hard to translate, in a way
5 Nancy Drew's boyfriend
6 Snag
7 Slip-ons lack
8 Third-largest of the Balearic Islands
9 Fish oil source
10 Like LOL, but not haha
11 Horan of One Direction
12 Lesotho, for one
13 Organ parts with rods and cones
14 Aquaman's staff
19 ___ pen
23 Honey or sugar
24 Feline
25 Pt. of USA
27 Far from far
29 Goods people
34 Scope rival
35 Wedding attire, for some
37 "Mambo Birdland" Grammy winner Puente
38 Low digits?
39 Milky Way kin
40 Silo
41 Indonesian island crossed by the equator
44 Bring up again
45 Colorful songbirds
46 Sourdough starter?
48 Charges
50 Product removed by shear force?
52 Value system
53 Heavy ___
57 Shut tight
60 Sci-fi craft
61 Thurman of "Gattaca"
62 Philly summer hrs.

H	O	S	E	■	A	S	S	T	■	V	I	B	E	S
I	M	A	X	■	V	O	L	E	■	A	D	O	B	O
P	A	T	A	G	O	N	I	A	■	L	I	S	T	S
T	H	Y	M	E	C	A	P	S	U	L	E	S	■	■
O	A	R	■	T	A	R	S	■	R	E	D	A	C	T
■	■	■	U	S	D	■	■	I	L	Y	■	N	A	E
B	E	E	T	B	O	X	E	R	S	■	G	O	N	E
L	A	C	E	Y	■	M	R	I	■	A	L	V	I	N
E	R	O	S	■	P	E	A	S	T	R	E	A	T	Y
A	T	L	■	M	T	N	■	■	I	B	N	■	■	■
T	H	O	M	A	S	■	S	O	S	O	■	L	A	N
■	■	G	A	R	D	E	N	V	A	R	I	E	T	Y
R	E	I	K	I	■	R	A	I	N	S	T	O	R	M
O	L	S	E	N	■	M	I	N	E	■	S	N	I	P
N	O	T	R	E	■	A	L	E	S	■	Y	E	A	H

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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Dow Jones Indust. Avg. Down 105.67 52,552.97

Nasdaq Comp. Down 387.28 25,881.95

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Chip selloff

Stocks fell Thursday as a fresh wave of selling hit semiconductor stocks and Google parent Alphabet. The Nasdaq tumbled nearly 400 points, or 1.5%. Brent crude oil prices fell less than 1% to $84.23 a barrel.

$ales slowing

Sales growth at US retailers rose at a slower pace in June as consumers spent less on gas due to falling prices at the pump. Retail sales grew by 0.2% last month to $768.6 billion, versus the 1% growth in May, the Commerce Department said.

Verizon ax

Verizon is cutting roughly 3,000 workers as part of a move to close hundreds of its retail stores. The company plans to divest itself of 274 of its retail stores to franchise owners but still keep 1,000.

Pioneer pill

US regulators approved Merck's first-of-its-kind pill called Lipfendra that is designed to treat high cholesterol, which is a major risk factor for heart attacks and strokes.

End of the line

Honda will end production this year of the Prologue SUV, the lone electric vehicle it sells in the US. Like some rivals, Honda is now focusing on hybrids for the US market.

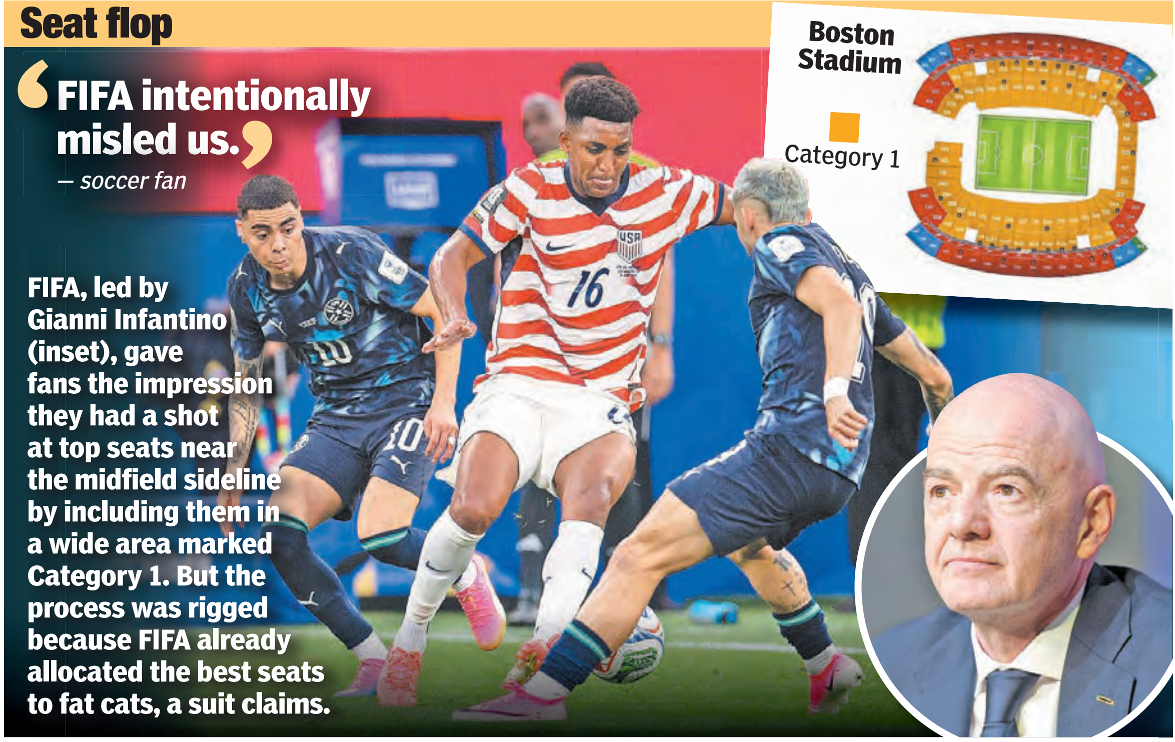
Sources: Reuters, Dow Jones, AP

FANS CORNER KICKED

'Deceptive' FIFA let VIPs hoard primo tix: suit

By JAMES FRANEY

Seat flop



"FIFA intentionally misled us."
— soccer fan

FIFA, led by Gianni Infantino (inset), gave fans the impression they had a shot at top seats near the midfield sideline by including them in a wide area marked Category 1. But the process was rigged because FIFA already allocated the best seats to fat cats, a suit claims.

Getty Images / FIFA

FIFA allegedly gave regular fans the idea they had a chance to sit by the pitch when they shelled out for premium World Cup tickets — but soccer's governing body secretly locked them out of the running, instead allocating all the best seats to corporate bigwigs and VIPs, according to a bombshell lawsuit reviewed by The Post.

The suit, filed as a class action earlier this month in Washington, DC, against FIFA's US subsidiary, accuses the organizers of "deceptive trade practices" over its coveted "Category 1" tickets for this summer's World Cup.

According to the complaint filed on July 2, FIFA gave fans the misimpression they had a shot at primo seats near the midfield sideline by including them in a wide area marked Category 1.

Since customers could only buy tickets by category — and not for specific seats — fans surmised they had a shot at ending up with the best spots once the tickets were actually doled out, the suit says.

'Scandalous'

But the process was effectively rigged because FIFA had already allocated the best Category 1 seats to VIPs as part of wallet-busting "hospitality packages" that could cost tens of thousands of dollars per person, the suit alleges.

"The fact that FIFA appears to have not made any of the sideline tickets available to people who bought Cat 1 is scandalous," fumes one anonymous fan quoted in the suit.

Another fan adds: "I feel like FIFA intentionally misled us when they provided us with that seating chart, making us think that we had a possibility of sitting beside the pitch, when in actuality that was never possible in the first place."

The plaintiff, Vera Feinhaus of Washington, DC., says she paid $1,680 for two Category 1 tickets for a July 4 knockout match in Philadelphia, relying on FIFA's seating chart.

When seat assignments dropped in March, she was relegated to an undesirable location near the stadium's corners, her complaint says.

The suit is seeking punitive damages and demanding FIFA cough up at least $1,500 per violation for every fan who bought a Category 1 ticket while in Washington, DC.

The lawsuit represents just the latest potential red card for FIFA over a US ticketing rollout that has left regular Joes scrambling for expensive resale seats.

The deceptive practices alleged in Feinhaus' complaint mirror The Post's recent report on Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium, which revealed how six-figure VIP hospitality suites were quietly shopped to wealthy elites and insiders long before general public sales even opened.

Meanwhile, the attorneys general of New York and New Jersey have slapped FIFA with a subpoena over its inflated prices and seat-switching tactics.

They are zeroing in on Sunday's final at MetLife Stadium, where a group of seats were once on sale for $2 million a pop under the tournament's dynamic pricing model.

Soccer fans wanting to attend Sunday's match between Spain and Argentina will need deep pockets. Tickets were for sale at the time of writing for around $7,700 to $112,000.

President Trump ripped the exorbitant prices in an exclusive interview with The Post on May 7.

"If people from Queens and Brooklyn and all of the people that love Donald Trump can't go, I would be disappointed," he said.

MSG sues over 'gay-celeb list' claim

Wired Magazine used stolen data to falsely accuse Madison Square Garden of creepily surveilling a "list" of gay celeb fans, the entertainment company said in a bombshell lawsuit.

In the defamation suit filed in Manhattan Supreme Court, the Garden accused Wired of using data stolen by a hacking group "to manufacture a false narrative portraying MSG as targeting the LGBTQIA community for discriminatory purposes."

The July 9 article accused the Garden of maintaining a secret database of celebs and assigning them "risk scores," Big Brother-style. Their race, gender and sexual identity were also cataloged, the piece claimed, with dozens of entries allegedly categorized as "LGBTQIA."

"Nothing could be further from the truth — MSG is a fervent supporter of the LGBTQIA community with a long history of inclusion, not exclusion," the Garden said Thursday.

The James Dolan-run business took issue with everything in the story from the details to the headline: "Madison Square Garden Kept a List of Gay Celebrities."

Madison Square Garden Entertainment is seeking a retraction, correction and damages. Wired didn't respond for comment.

Ariel Zilber

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NYC biz bigs fail to concede key crime rises

On the money
CHARLES GASPARINO

CRIME in the Big Apple isn't "down" no matter how many times you read those headlines — but the city's business community can't seem to let go of the fantasy, On The Money has learned.

Leaders of our business class are touting declines of certain crimes as proof that the city is safe for workers and entrepreneurs. And to be fair, it's partly true: Murders are down nearly 50% over the past 16 years, and almost 34% lower than they were just two years ago.

Shootings, meanwhile, are down around 27% from two years ago and down more than 50% since 2012, which would have included the final years of **Mike Bloomberg**'s mayoral stint.

But that's not the whole story. Felonious assault complaints are nearly 77% higher than 16 years ago, and about 1% higher than just two years back. Transit crime continues to escalate; it's 7% higher than 2010 and up 1.2% over the past two years. While grand larceny has recently fallen, it's still 22% above its Bloomberg levels.

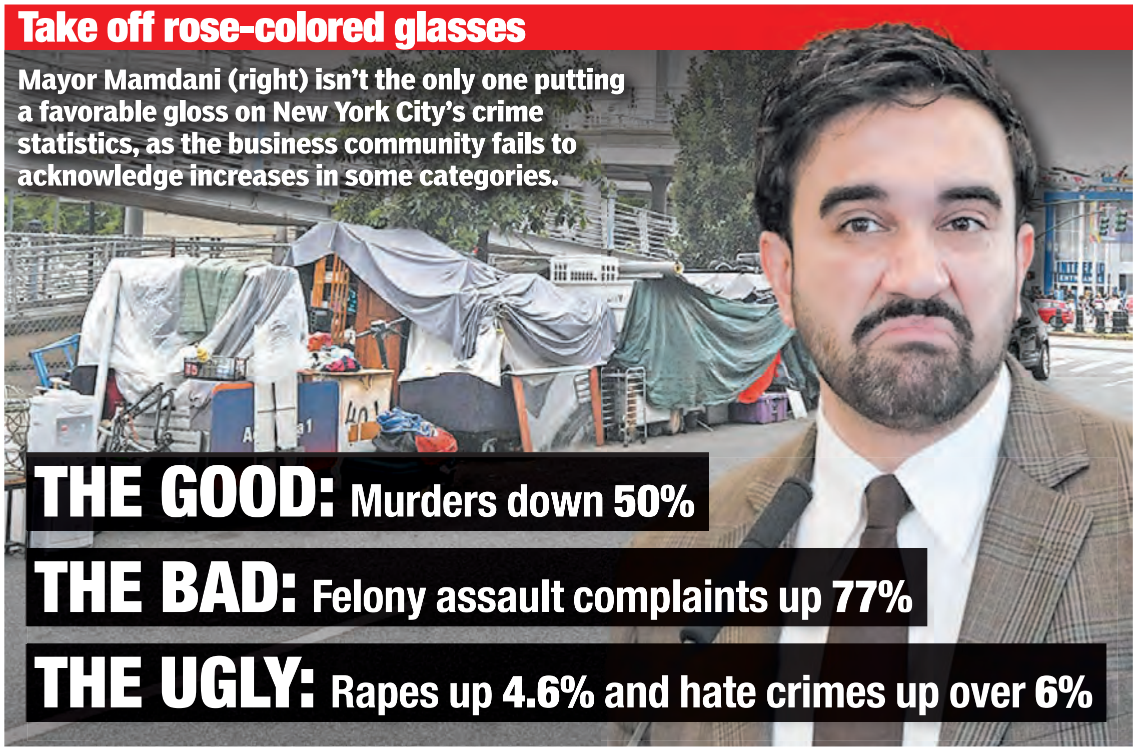
More rapes reported

And here's where things get downright scary: Rapes are up 4.6% over the past year, and hate crimes more than 6%.

The contradiction was recently brought to my attention by a top litigator at a big Manhattan law firm who served in the Justice Department under **George W. Bush** and who knows his way around NYPD's so-called CompStat crime reports that get published weekly.

"The city also has two glaring problems: an epidemic of rape and hate crimes a k a criminal antisemitism," my source tells me. "Over the past two years, rape is up more than 30%, and 73% since 2010."

"Yes, the murder rate has dramatically declined. Ditto shooting incidents," he added. "But those figures only tell part of the story."



Take off rose-colored glasses

Mayor Mamdani (right) isn't the only one putting a favorable gloss on New York City's crime statistics, as the business community fails to acknowledge increases in some categories.

THE GOOD: Murders down 50%

THE BAD: Felony assault complaints up 77%

THE UGLY: Rapes up 4.6% and hate crimes up over 6%

Andrew Schwartz / SplashNews.com, Matthew McDermott for NY Post

Danger clear and present

To be clear, I get why city business leaders are looking at the proverbial glass half filled. It's no fun running a company under the yoke of **Zohran Mamdani**'s incompetent, socialist mayoralty that seeks to tax anything that moves to fund his ever-growing welfare state.

Steve Fulop, the CEO of the Partnership for NYC, the city's leading business advocacy group, tells me "crime statistics don't move in a straight line, but the multiyear trend remains favorable, and murder, the most serious indicator of overall trend, is down.

"Beyond the numbers, business sentiment on public safety is also positive, which reflects the job Commissioner [**Jessica**] **Tisch** is doing and her regular, direct engagement with our members."

It's hard to dispute that NYPD chief Tisch is doing yeoman's work despite some formidable obstacles, including a mayor who thinks sidewalk homelessness is a right and local DAs who believe the best way to reduce crime is to no longer enforce the laws. Let's not forget that **Jay Clayton**, **President Trump**'s US Attorney for the Southern District of Manhattan, has also embarked on a sweeping crackdown on violent criminals here in the city, and it's having an impact.

That said, the numbers don't lie. NYC is a dangerous place, and the question business people will be asking increasingly: Is it worth the cost of doing business here?

Bond market starting to doubt Mam-onomics

Mayor Mamdani's luck in the municipal bond market appears to be running out.

After stabilizing or increasing a bit in the last couple of months, prices of New York City municipal bonds in July took a hit, with the "yield" — or return demanded by investors to compensate for various types of risk — spiking noticeably between July 3-10, the latest data show.

The yield on a 10-year GO bond jumped to 3.34% from 3.28%, while the yield on a 10-year bond from what's known as the "transitional finance authority" jumped 10 basis points — or hundredths of a percentage point, in bond-market speak — to 3.26%.

Note that bond prices move in the opposite direction of yields, because when people bail on any form of debt, you need a higher yield to attract new buyers.

Both GOs and so-called TFA bonds are the main ways that the city finances billions of dollars of capital improvements.

The city's debt load is around $125 billion. Roads keep needing repairs, so city officials need to keep finding buyers. The unusually high taxes here help with that since municipal bond returns are triple tax free for city residents.

But other factors often come into play, such as the level of interest rates and if the city will be ultimately able to make good on its obligations. On that last point, investors are starting to have doubts with Mamdani in charge, Wall Street salesmen tell me. *Charles Gasparino*

Chevron eyes Iraq pipeline

Chevron reportedly plans to sign early-stage deals Friday to invest in Iraqi oil fields and consider the construction of a pipeline connecting Iraq's reservoirs to the Syrian coast as oil majors seek workarounds for the Strait of Hormuz.

As the US and Iran have renewed strikes in the Middle East, major oil producers — including Iraq — have been desperately searching for alternatives to the strait, a vital maritime route for 20% of the world's oil supplies that has been effectively blockaded during the war.

Nations across the Persian Gulf have poured billions of dollars into new pipelines, rail corridors and energy storage hubs to skirt around the strait — and now Chevron is considering getting in on the action, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The Houston-based oil major is considering rebuilding a pipeline from Kirkuk, Iraq, to the Syrian port of Baniyas on the Mediterranean Sea, a senior Chevron official told the outlet.

The company has been in talks with the Iraqi government for 12 to 18 months and the preliminary deals are a "long ways from the finish line," he said.

Taylor Herzlich

Pay up for insta-Don

President Trump broke with tradition by posting policy decisions and market-moving news on his social-media platform.

Now his media company wants traders and investors to pay for instant access to his Truth Social posts.

Trump Media & Technology Group said Thursday it plans to launch a data feed that gives real-time access to posts from the highest-ranking accounts on its Truth Social platform.

The Truth API data feed would be available to institutional customers, including high-frequency algorithmic trading firms, starting next month. *Dow Jones*

DARIO AMODEI
Note warned of "killing."

Anthropic intruder 'threat'

A man reportedly snuck into the lobby of AI startup Anthropic to warn that a top executive was "going to be killed" — the latest incident of violent threats against tech execs as public opinion on AI sours.

On April 15, a man entered the San Francisco headquarters of Anthropic, by closely following behind an employee who swiped in with their badge, according to The Wall Street Journal.

A security guard rushed over to stop the intruder, who then showed the guard an envelope marked with the name of a top executive — warning that the employee was "going to be killed" and he needed to alert someone, the report said, citing records of the incident.

Anthropic, headed by CEO Dario Amodei, told The Post it has operated 24/7 security since 2024 and regularly communicates with employees about emerging risks.

Taylor Herzlich

'Chip'ping in $100B more

Chip giant Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. is supercharging an already massive US investment spree — pledging an additional $100 billion to meet surging AI demand.

The move brings TSMC's investment in the US to $265 billion and comes as the company posted second-quarter earnings that blew past market expectations Thursday.

TSMC supplies powerful chips that are critical for tech giants like Apple and Nvidia. *Marc Vartabedian*

WEISS MAKES NICE

Softens style since '60 Mins.' bloodbath

By ALEXANDRA STEIGRAD

Kinder, gentler boss

Bari Weiss (left), CBS News' editor-in-chief, is taking a friendlier, more supportive and hands-on approach toward staff since she sparked controversy by firing several star reporters and producers of the news show "60 Minutes."

"Since the '60' explosion, she's been very nice to people." — CBS insider

Getty Images

Bari Weiss has lately rejiggered her hard-charging management style following the bloodbath at "60 Minutes" — pivoting to a notably friendlier, more hands-on approach with staffers, The Post has learned.

In recent weeks, Weiss has begun the Friday editorial call by "celebrating" wins and identifying specific journalists who have done a good job — often reading aloud names she's jotted down in a notebook, according to network sources.

That's versus Weiss's earlier habit of staying largely aloof in the newsroom — descending to the rank and file mostly to pick apart the news division's work rather than to praise it, according to sources.

"She made zero effort before, but since the '60' explosion, she's been very nice to people," one source told The Post.

Charm offensive

The fresh charm offensive comes after the CBS News editor-in chief fired a number of "60 Minutes" star reporters and producers. Those included veteran correspondents Sharyn Alfonsi, Cecilia Vega, executive producer Tanya Simon and — in a headline-grabbing finale — veteran correspondent Scott Pelley.

Following the brutal bloodbath, Weiss, 42, moved her office to a sixth-floor suite at the CBS Broadcast Center on Manhattan's West Side that was reportedly "locked to outside visitors" — up from a second-floor office that had overlooked the newsroom.

Sources close to CBS claimed Weiss's move upstairs had been planned months in advance and that the timing was merely coincidental. Nevertheless, the move drew criticism that she had barricaded herself away from employees following the layoffs.

In recent weeks, however, Weiss has since adopted an open-door policy at her sixth-floor office, sources said.

"I think Bari has been given management training and told to develop relationships with existing staff and try to retain them," a CBS source speculated, adding that until now, Weiss did not schmooze with the talent or try to get to know employees much.

CBS News declined to comment.

A network source said that Weiss has not received any management training since the "60 Minutes" upheaval, claiming that she's always had an open-door policy since joining the network last October.

Weiss's kinder, gentler approach comes as speculation about her own career prospects has lately taken a turn, according to insiders.

This spring, Weiss had appeared to be a lock to run CNN after CBS owner Paramount Skydance cemented its deal to acquire CNN's owner Warner Bros. Discovery. But since the "60 Minutes" blow-up, Weiss and her lieutenants are more "cautious" talking about their future at CNN.

"They're no longer talking about CNN like it's a sure thing," one source said.

The $110 billion media merger, expected to close later this year, will bring a slew of properties under the same roof, including movie studios Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros. news outlets CNN and CBS, as well as HBO, Paramount+ and several cable channels.

asteigrad@nypost.com

Nike's merch madness

Nike ran low on US soccer jerseys at the worst possible time. Now they are restocking, too late to capitalize on the team's run through the World Cup.

Many versions of the US men's soccer jerseys sold out two weeks into the tournament, after the team dominated Paraguay and Australia in its first two games. Nike restocked the kits this week, more than a week after the team's elimination by Belgium.

The empty shelves are the latest stumble as Nike is attempting a turnaround. The shortages weren't limited to the American team. Nike sold out of jerseys for at least four of its 16 sponsored federations. *Dow Jones*

'Net' Q2 gains for streamer

Netflix continued to see growth in the second quarter despite concerns that the company needs to do more to keep subscribers interested in its programming.

The company reported second-quarter revenue of $12.56 billion, up more than 13% from the same period a year earlier. Net income rose almost 9%, to $3.4 billion. The results were roughly in line with analysts' expectations.

Netflix attributed the gains in part to recent price increases and growth in advertising.

Still, the company said it expects revenue growth to slow for the third quarter.

Shares fell 7% in after-hours trading.

Netflix said Thursday that viewers watched more than 97 billion hours of content on its service in the first half of 2026, up 1.5% from the second half of 2025 and 1.9% from the first half of last year. *Dow Jones*

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NOTICE OF SALE OF COOPERATIVE APARTMENT SECURITY

By virtue of default in a security agreement dated May 13, 2008, executed by Maritza Poupart, Debtor, and in accordance with its rights as holder of the Security, Newrez LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing, by Terence Gee, John William O'Keefe, or Stephan Marcelin (Auctioneers) will conduct a public sale of the security consisting of 356 shares of common stock allocated to Unit / Apt. 37 in 447 Ft. Washington Owners Corp., and all rights title and interest in and to a Proprietary Lease between said corporation and debtor for Unit / Apt. 37 in a building known as and by the street address, 447 Fort Washington Avenue, New York, NY 10033, together with fixtures and articles of personal property now or hereafter affixed to or used in connection with said apartment on the 11th of August, in the year 2026 at 1:00 PM at the Portico of the New York County Courthouse, 60 Centre St, New York, NY 10007, in satisfaction of an indebtedness in the principal amount of $225,568.23 plus interest, late fees, attorney's fees, maintenance in arrears and all other advanced charges, an accounting of which will be provided upon request. Such sale shall be subject to the terms of sale, any existing tenancy, and the consent of and payment of all sums due, if any, to 447 Ft. Washington Owners Corp., and/or their attorneys. The secured party reserves the right to bid. Certified funds made payable to McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLP, as attorneys for the Secured Party for ten (10%) percent of price bid. No cash accepted. Closing within 30 days.

**McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLP
File # 21-10251NY
420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 840
New York, New York 10170
Attorneys for Secured Creditor**

NOTICE OF SALE
SUPREME COURT - COUNTY OF QUEENS

HSBC BANK USA, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, UNDER THE POOLING AND SERVICING AGREEMENT DATED AS OF MAY 1, 2006, FREEMONT HOME LOAN TRUST 2006-A, MORTGAGE-BACKED CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2006-A,

Plaintiff,

Against

JASON DANTZLER, et al

Defendant(s)

Pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale, duly entered 07/21/2025, I, the undersigned Referee, will sell at public auction, in Courtroom #25 of the Queens County Supreme Court, 88-11 Sutphin Boulevard, Jamaica, NY 11435, on 8/14/2026 at 10:00AM, premises known as 137-23 Bedell Street, Queens, New York 11413, and described as follows:
ALL that certain plot piece or parcel of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate, lying and being in the Borough and County of Queens, City and State of New York.
Block 13022 Lot 34
The approximate amount of the current Judgment lien is $950,940.48 plus interest and costs. The Premises will be sold subject to provisions of the aforesaid Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale; Index # 726708/2021
Austin Idehen, Esq., Referee.
MCCABE, WEISBERG & CONWAY, LLC, 10 Midland Avenue, Suite 205, Port Chester, NY 10573
Dated: 6/11/2026 File Number: 18-301574 CA

Notification is hereby given that Bank of America National Association, 100 North Tryon Street, Suite 170, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, NC, 28202, has filed an application with the Comptroller of the Currency on July 17, 2026, as specified in 12 CFR 5 of the Comptroller's Licensing Manual, for permission to establish a domestic branch in the vicinity of:

- 410 10th Avenue, New York, New York County, NY 10001

Any person wishing to comment on this application may file comments in writing with the Director for Large Bank Licensing, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, 7 Times Square, 10th Floor Mailroom, New York, New York 10036, within 30 days after the date of this publication. The public may find information about the filing in the OCC's Weekly Bulletin available at www.occ.gov. Additionally, the public portion of the filed application is available upon request.

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NOTICE OF SALE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE, that in accordance with applicable provisions of the Uniform Commercial Code as enacted in New York, by virtue of certain Event(s) of Default under that certain Ownership Interest Pledge and Security Agreement, dated as of September 30, 2022 (the "**Pledge Agreement**"), executed and delivered by OnBoard Hospitality Holdings LLC (the "**Pledgor**"), and in accordance with its rights as holder of the security, SBT Capital, LLC (the "**Secured Party**"), by virtue of that certain UCC-1 Filing Statement made in favor of Secured Party, and in accordance with Article 9 of the Uniform Commercial Code of the State of New York (the "**Code**"), Secured Party will offer for sale, at public auction, (i) Pledgor's 100% membership interest in and to OnBoard Hospitality LLC (the "**Pledged Entity**"), and (ii) certain related rights and property relating thereto (collectively, (i) and (ii) are the "**Collateral**"). Secured Party's understanding is that the principal assets of the Pledged Entity is that certain real property commonly known as 34-36 West 38th Street, New York, New York (the "**Property**") (collectively, the "**Property**"). Maltz Auctions ("**Maltz**"), under the direction of Richard B. Maltz or David A. Constantino (the "**Auctioneer**"), will conduct a public sale consisting of the Collateral (as set forth in Schedule A below), via online bidding, on **July 24, 2026 at 1:00pm**, in satisfaction of an indebtedness in the approximate amount of **$6,885,988.45**, including principal, interest on principal, and reasonable fees and costs, plus default interest through July 24, 2026, subject to open charges and all additional costs, fees and disbursements permitted by law. The Secured Party reserves the right to credit bid. Online bidding will be made available for pre-registered bidders via Maltz's online bidding App available for download in the App Store or on Google play and via desktop bidding at remotebidding.maltzauctions.com. **Bidder Qualification Deadline**: July 23, 2026 by 3:30 pm. Executed Terms & Conditions of Sale along with ten (10%) of Bidders intended bid amount (to be submitted via **wire transfer**) are required for consideration by any interested party and submitted directly to Maltz. Requests for wiring instructions should be sent to **rmaltz@maltzauctions.com.**

SCHEDULE A

Pledged Interest
PLEDGOR ***ONBOARD HOSPITALITY HOLDINGS, LLC, a New York limited liability company***
ISSUER ***ONBOARD HOSPITALITY LLC, a New York limited liability company***
INTERESTS PLEDGED ***100% membership interest***

KRISS & FEUERSTEIN LLP
Attn: Michael J. Bonneville, Esq.
Attorneys for Secured Party
360 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1200
New York, New York 10017
(212) 661-2900

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Golf

The Open Championship
At Royal Birkdale; Southport, United Kingdom; Purse: $17.8 million; Yardage: 7,223; Par: 70
First Round

Jackson Suber,	34-31	65	-5
Daniel Brown,	33-33	66	-4
Sungjae Im,	34-32	66	-4
Pierceson Coody,	33-34	67	-3
MJ Daffue,	32-35	67	-3
Bryson DeChambeau,	32-35	67	-3
Thomas Detry,	32-35	67	-3
Ryan Gerard,	30-37	67	-3
Robert MacIntyre,	33-34	67	-3
Francesco Molinari,	34-33	67	-3
Alex Smalley,	31-36	67	-3
Cameron Young,	33-34	67	-3
Bud Cauley,	32-36	68	-2
Ryo Hisatsune,	34-34	68	-2
Si Woo Kim,	33-35	68	-2
Joakim Lagergren,	33-35	68	-2
Collin Morikawa,	31-37	68	-2
Victor Perez,	35-33	68	-2
Scottie Scheffler,	31-37	68	-2
Jordan L. Smith,	34-34	68	-2
Henrik Stenson,	33-35	68	-2
Sepp Straka,	35-33	68	-2
Nick Taylor,	31-37	68	-2
Keegan Bradley,	34-35	69	-1
Laurie Canter,	32-37	69	-1
Alex Fitzpatrick,	32-37	69	-1
Tommy Fleetwood,	33-36	69	-1
Ben Griffin,	33-36	69	-1
Tyrrell Hatton,	32-37	69	-1
Kurt Kitayama,	35-34	69	-1
Shane Lowry,	33-36	69	-1
Shaun Norris,	33-36	69	-1
Aldrich Potgieter,	37-32	69	-1
Jon Rahm, Spain	33-36	69	-1
Kristoffer Reitan,	33-36	69	-1
Antoine Rozner,	34-35	69	-1
Matthew Southgate,	35-34	69	-1
Matt Wallace,	34-35	69	-1
Jacob Bridgeman,	34-36	70	E
Hennie Du Plessis,	33-37	70	E
Chris Gotterup,	34-36	70	E
Russell Henley,	35-35	70	E
Lucas Herbert,	36-34	70	E
Viktor Hovland,	33-37	70	E
Cameron John,	34-36	70	E
John Keefer,	36-34	70	E
Tom Kim,	33-37	70	E
Kazuma Kobori,	36-34	70	E
Brooks Koepka,	34-36	70	E
Min Woo Lee,	33-37	70	E
Eugenio Lopez-Chacarra,	35-35	70	E
Jack McDonald,	32-38	70	E
Marcus Plunkett,	35-35	70	E
Jayden Trey Schaper,	35-35	70	E
J.J. Spaun,	35-35	70	E
Andy Sullivan,	34-36	70	E
Justin Thomas,	34-36	70	E
Michael Thorbjornsen,	34-36	70	E
Sami Valimaki,	35-35	70	E
Ludvig Aberg,	36-35	71	+1
Josele Ballester,	37-34	71	+1
Akshay Bhatia,	34-37	71	+1
Patrick Cantlay,	35-36	71	+1
Corey Conners,	35-36	71	+1
Nicolas Echavarria,	34-37	71	+1
Rickie Fowler,	35-36	71	+1
Lev Grinberg,	36-35	71	+1
Rasmus Hojgaard,	35-36	71	+1
Max Homa,	35-36	71	+1
Billy Horschel,	34-37	71	+1
Jake Knapp,	34-37	71	+1
Tom McKibbin,	35-36	71	+1
Maverick McNealy,	33-38	71	+1
Ryutaro Nagano,	33-38	71	+1
Alex Noren,	35-36	71	+1
John Parry,	33-38	71	+1
J.T. Poston,	35-36	71	+1
Aaron Rai,	34-37	71	+1
Xander Schauffele,	33-38	71	+1
Thomas Sloman,	35-36	71	+1
Travis Smyth,	35-36	71	+1
Sam Stevens,	34-37	71	+1
Sahith Theegala,	33-38	71	+1
Bernd Wiesberger,	35-36	71	+1
Angel Ayora Fanegas,	33-39	72	+2
Sam Bairstow,	36-36	72	+2
Matthew Baldwin,	35-37	72	+2
Michael Brennan,	35-37	72	+2
Joe Dean,	36-36	72	+2
Matt Fitzpatrick,	36-36	72	+2
Ryan Fox,	35-37	72	+2
Daniel Hillier,	33-39	72	+2
Nicolai Hojgaard,	36-36	72	+2
Michael Hollick,	35-37	72	+2
Kota Kaneko, J	37-35	72	+2
Frederic Lacroix,	36-36	72	+2
Hao-Tong Li,	36-36	72	+2
Hideki Matsuyama,	35-37	72	+2
Rory McIlroy,	35-37	72	+2
Keith Mitchell,	34-38	72	+2
Rasmus Neergaard-Petersen,	36-36	72	+2
Marco Penge,	35-37	72	+2
Patrick Reed,	36-36	72	+2
Adam Scott, Australia	36-36	72	+2
Caleb Surratt,	37-35	72	+2
Jack Buchanan,	37-36	73	+3

PGA/DP Corales Puntacana Championship
At Corales Golf Club; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; Purse: $4 million; Yardage: 7,670; Par: 72
First Round

Ivan Cantero Gutierrez, Spain	32-33	65	-7
Todd Clements, England	32-33	65	-7
Jonathan Byrd, United States	33-33	66	-6
Alejandro Del Rey, Spain	32-34	66	-6
Austin Eckroat, United States	33-33	66	-6
Mackenzie Hughes, Canada	31-35	66	-6
Gordon Sargent, United States	33-33	66	-6
Johannes Veerman, United States	31-35	66	-6

2027 MLB Yankees Schedule

Times to be announced
March 25-28 Toronto
March 29-31 Athletics
April 1-4 at Cleveland
April 5-7 at Pittsburgh
April 9-11 Arizona
April 13-15 at Detroit
April 16-18 Washington
April 19-21 Milwaukee
April 23-25 at Houston
April 26-28 at Kansas City
April 30-May 2 Chicago Cubs
May 3-6 Tampa Bay
May 7-9 at Miami
May 10-13 at Baltimore
May 14-16 Philadelphia
May 18-20 L.A. Angels
May 21-23 San Francisco
May 25-27 at Toronto
May 28-30 at **Mets**
May 31-June 2 Kansas City
June 4-7 at Boston
June 8-10 Baltimore
June 11-13 Boston
June 15-17 at Tampa Bay
June 18-20 at Atlanta
June 21-23 at Minnesota
June 25-27 Detroit
June 28-July 1 Seattle
July 2-4 Houston
July 6-8 at Chicago White Sox
July 9-11 at St. Louis
July 16-18 **Mets**
July 19-21 Cleveland
July 23-25 at Seattle
July 26-28 at Colorado
July 30-Aug. 2 Toronto
Aug. 3-5 Minnesota
Aug. 6-8 at Boston
Aug. 9-11 at Tampa Bay
Aug. 13-15 at Cincinnati
Aug. 16-18 Baltimore
Aug. 20-22 Texas
Aug. 24-26 at L.A. Angels
Aug. 27-29 at L.A. Dodgers
Aug. 31-Sept. 2 San Diego
Sept. 3-5 Tampa Bay
Sept. 6-8 at Texas
Sept. 10-12 at Athletics
Sept. 14-16 Chicago White Sox
Sept. 17-19 Boston
Sept. 21-23 at Toronto
Sept. 24-26 at Baltimore

2027 Mets MLB Schedule

Times to be announced
March 25-27 at Miami
March 29-31 at Washington
April 2-4 San Francisco
April 5-8 Cincinnati
April 9-11 at Detroit
April 13-15 L.A. Angels
April 16-18 at Colorado
April 19-21 at Athletics
April 23-25 Texas
April 26-28 Toronto
April 29-May 2 at Atlanta
May 4-6 at Philadelphia
May 7-9 Tampa Bay
May 11-13 Philadelphia
May 14-16 at Milwaukee
May 17-19 at San Diego
May 21-23 at Minnesota
May 24-26 Atlanta
May 28-30 **Yankees**
May 31-June 2 at Baltimore
June 3-6 Miami
June 7-9 at Kansas City
June 11-13 at San Francisco
June 15-17 San Diego
June 18-20 Washington
June 21-23 Milwaukee
June 25-27 at St. Louis
June 28-30 at Arizona
July 1-July 4 at L.A. Dodgers
July 6-8 Miami
July 9-July 11 L.A. Dodgers
July 16-July 18 at **Yankees**
July 19-21 at Boston
July 22-25 Philadelphia
July 26-28 Arizona
July 30-Aug. 1 at Pittsburgh
Aug. 2-4 at Cincinnati
Aug. 6-8 Washington
Aug. 9-11 Atlanta
Aug. 13-15 St. Louis
Aug. 17-19 at Houston
Aug. 20-22 at Atlanta
Aug. 24-26 Colorado
Aug. 27-29 Chicago White Sox
Aug. 31-Sept. 2 at Miami
Sept. 3- 5 at Philadelphia
Sept. 6-8 Seattle
Sept. 10-12 Cleveland
Sept. 13-16 at Washington
Sept. 17-19 at Chicago Cubs
Sept. 21- 23 Pittsburgh
Sept. 24-26 Chicago Cubs

AL Standings

East	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Tampa Bay	56	38	.596	—	—	5-5	L-1	35-15	21-23
Yankees	54	42	.563	3	+6½	6-4	W-4	23-20	31-22
Boston	46	48	.489	10	½	9-1	W-9	17-27	29-21
Baltimore	46	51	.474	11½	2	7-3	W-4	28-25	18-26
Toronto	45	51	.469	12	2½	5-5	L-2	24-25	21-26

Central	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Cleveland	51	46	.526	—	+3	6-4	W-4	24-22	27-24
Chicago	50	45	.526	—	—	5-5	W-3	31-17	19-28
Minnesota	48	49	.495	3	—	7-3	W-2	26-25	22-24
Detroit	44	52	.458	6½	3½	7-3	L-2	27-23	17-29
Kansas City	38	59	.392	13	10	3-7	L-5	21-26	17-33

West	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Texas	49	47	.510	—	—	5-5	W-1	24-22	25-25
Seattle	48	49	.495	1½	—	4-6	W-1	27-20	21-29
Houston	47	51	.480	3	1½	4-6	L-1	23-24	24-27
Athletics	41	55	.427	8	6½	1-9	L-9	19-28	22-27
Los Angeles	38	59	.392	11½	10	2-8	L-2	21-25	17-34

***WGB:** Games behind third-place team in wild-card race

Thursday
No Games Scheduled
Friday
Tampa Bay at Boston, Gm. 1, 1:35pm
L.A. Dodgers at **Yankees,** 7:05pm
Pittsburgh at Cleveland, 7:10pm
Tampa Bay at Boston, Gm. 2, 7:10pm
Texas at Atlanta, 7:15pm
Chicago White Sox at Toronto, 7:15pm
Minnesota at Chicago Cubs, 8:05pm
Baltimore at Houston, 8:10pm
San Diego at Kansas City, 8:10pm
Detroit at L.A. Angels, 9:38pm
Washington at Athletics, 9:40pm
San Francisco at Seattle, 10:10pm

NL Standings

East	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Atlanta	55	40	.579	—	—	5-5	W-1	27-18	28-22
Philadelphia	54	44	.551	2½	+1½	5-5	L-1	25-22	29-22
Miami	52	45	.536	4	—	6-4	L-3	31-20	21-25
Washington	48	49	.495	8	4	4-6	L-3	20-31	28-18
Mets	41	57	.418	15½	11½	5-5	W-1	21-28	20-29

Central	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Milwaukee	59	37	.615	—	—	5-5	L-3	29-18	30-19
Chicago	54	42	.563	5	+2½	6-4	W-2	27-19	27-23
St. Louis	50	45	.526	8½	1	4-6	L-1	26-26	24-19
Pittsburgh	50	47	.515	9½	2	7-3	W-3	27-24	23-23
Cincinnati	43	52	.453	15½	8	4-6	L-2	22-28	21-24

West	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Los Angeles	61	36	.629	—	—	5-5	L-3	31-19	30-17
Arizona	49	47	.510	11½	2½	6-4	W-4	27-20	22-27
San Diego	48	48	.500	12½	3½	5-5	W-2	27-24	21-24
San Francisco	41	55	.427	19½	10½	5-5	W-2	22-25	19-30
Colorado	39	59	.398	22½	13½	4-6	L-2	22-25	17-34

***WGB:** Games behind third-place team in wild-card race

Thursday
Mets 4, Philadelphia 1
Friday
L.A. Dodgers vs. **Yankees,** 7:10pm
Pittsburgh at Cleveland, 7:10pm
Texas at Atlanta, 7:15pm
Miami at Milwaukee, 7:40pm
Cincinnati at Colorado 8:40pm
Washington at Athletics, 9:40pm
St. Louis at Arizona, 9:40pm
San Francisco at Seattle, 10:10pm

POST SU DOKU

Puzzles on Page 36

2	3	1	8	5	6	4	7	9
6	7	8	3	9	4	2	1	5
9	5	4	1	7	2	3	8	6
5	2	9	7	6	1	8	4	3
7	8	3	4	2	5	9	6	1
1	4	6	9	8	3	7	5	2
8	1	2	5	4	9	6	3	7
4	6	5	2	3	7	1	9	8
3	9	7	6	1	8	5	2	4

Solution to Very Easy #7,342

2	8	7	9	5	1	6	3	4
6	4	5	7	3	8	1	2	9
9	1	3	6	2	4	7	8	5
8	3	1	5	7	9	4	6	2
7	2	9	1	4	6	8	5	3
5	6	4	2	8	3	9	1	7
3	5	8	4	6	7	2	9	1
1	7	2	8	9	5	3	4	6
4	9	6	3	1	2	5	7	8

Solution to Difficult #7,132

Mets 4, Phillies 1

Mets	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg
Ewing cf	5	0	1	1	0	2	.274
Soto lf	1	0	1	0	3	0	.292
Taylor lf	1	0	0	0	0	1	.215
Bichette 3b	4	0	0	0	0	1	.253
Lindor ss	4	0	0	0	0	0	.210
Benge rf	4	0	1	0	0	0	.263
Polanco dh	4	0	0	0	0	1	.169
Young 1b	2	1	0	0	2	2	.245
Baty 2b	4	1	2	1	0	0	.224
Alvarez c	3	2	2	2	1	1	.259
Totals	**32**	**4**	**7**	**4**	**6**	**8**	

Philadelphia	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg
Turner ss	4	1	1	1	0	1	.236
Schwarber dh	4	0	1	0	0	1	.254
Harper 1b	3	0	1	0	1	1	.261
Marsh lf	4	0	0	0	0	1	.297
Bohm 3b	4	0	0	0	0	1	.213
Stott 2b	3	0	0	0	0	2	.247
Realmuto c	3	0	1	0	0	0	.208
Rincones rf	3	0	0	0	0	2	.171
Crawford cf	3	0	0	0	0	0	.260
Totals	**31**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**1**	**9**	

Mets	**001 000 201 —**	**4**	**7**	**1**
Philadelphia	**000 000 010 —**	**1**	**4**	**1**

E: Lindor (5), Turner (13). **LOB:** New York 7, Philadelphia 4. **2B:** Ewing (10), Harper (18), Schwarber (10). **HR:** Alvarez 2 (11), off Nola; Baty (5), off Nola; Turner (11), off Weaver. **RBIs:** Alvarez 2 (24), Baty (32), Ewing (25), Turner (34). **SB:** Benge (16). **CS:** Schwarber (1). **Runners left in scoring position:** New York 5 (Taylor, Bichette 2, Young 2); Philadelphia 2 (Bohm, Marsh). **RISP:** New York 0 for 6; Philadelphia 0 for 3.

Mets	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Scott, W, 3-1	5.2	3	0	0	0	7	79	2.87
Raley, H, 13	0.1	0	0	0	1	1	7	2.02
Brazobán, H, 7	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	12	2.70
Weaver, H, 13	1.0	1	1	1	0	0	9	2.02
Williams, S, 14-17	1.0	0	0	0	0	1	13	4.68

Philadelphia	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Nola, L, 3-7	6.0	6	3	3	4	6	97	5.68
Bowlan	1.0	0	0	0	1	0	14	2.84
Johnson	2.0	1	1	1	1	2	27	6.75

T: 2:37. **A:** 40,109 (42,901).

Tour de France

Thursday, July 16- Stage 12
A 179.1-mile ride from Circuit Nevers Magny-Cours to Chalon-sur-Saône
Stage Results:
1. Tim Merlier, Belgium, Soudal Quick-Step, 03:38:53.
2. Olav Kooij, Netherlands, Decathlon CMA CGM Team, same time.
3. Jasper Philipsen, Belgium, Alpecin-Premier Tech, same time.
4. Biniam Girmay, Eritrea, NSN Cycling Team, same time.
5. Milan Fretin, Belgium, Cofidis, same time.
6. Anthony Turgis, France, TotalEnergies, same time.
7. Max Kanter, Germany, XDS Astana Team, same time.
8. Clément Russo, France, Groupama-FDJ United, same time.
9. Mads Pedersen, Denmark, Lidl-Trek, same time.
10. Henri Artz, Netherlands, Lotto Intermarché, same time.

Also:
45. Quinn Simmons, United States, Lidl-Trek, 03:39:54.
54. Brandon McNulty, United States, UAE Team Emirates XRG, same time.
64. Sean Quinn, United States, EF Education-EasyPost, 03:40:10.
66. Sepp Kuss, United States, Team Visma ' Lease a Bike, same time.
167. Matteo Jorgenson, United States, Team Visma ' Lease a Bike, 03:46:39.

Overall Standings:
1. Tadej Pogacar, Slovenia, UAE Team Emirates XRG, 43:04:01.
2. Jonas Vingegaard Hansen, Denmark, Team Visma ' Lease a Bike, 43:07:37.
3. Remco Evenepoel, Belgium, Red Bull - Bora - Hansgrohe, 43:08:07.
4. Juan Ayuso, Spain, Lidl-Trek, 43:08:23.
5. Paul Seixas, France, Decathlon CMA CGM Team, 43:08:36.
6. Florian Lipowitz, Germany, Red Bull - Bora - Hansgrohe, 43:08:45.
7. Isaac Del Toro, Mexico, UAE Team Emirates XRG, 43:09:09.
8. Mattias Skjelmose, Denmark, Lidl-Trek, 43:09:46.
9. Lenny Martinez, France, Bahrain Victorious, 43:10:35.
10. Tom Pidcock, Great Britain, Pinarello-Q36.5 Pro Cycling Team, 43:15:50.

MLS

EAST	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	10	1	3	33	31	11
Inter Miami CF	9	2	4	31	39	28
Chicago	8	4	2	26	27	16
New England	8	5	1	25	22	18
Red Bulls	6	5	4	22	25	32
Charlotte FC	6	6	3	21	24	23
Cincinnati	5	5	5	20	36	37
NYCFC	5	6	4	19	25	21
D.C. United	4	5	6	18	21	25
Columbus	4	7	4	16	21	23
CF Montréal	4	8	3	15	22	31
Toronto FC	3	6	6	15	22	29
Orlando City	4	9	2	14	23	44
Atlanta	3	9	2	11	14	23
Philadelphia	1	10	4	7	18	30

WEST	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	10	2	2	32	34	12
San Jose	10	3	2	32	34	15
Real Salt Lake	8	4	2	26	26	19
FC Dallas	7	4	4	25	30	22
Los Angeles FC	7	5	3	24	24	17
Seattle FC	7	4	3	24	18	16
Houston	7	6	1	22	19	23
Minn. United	6	5	4	22	18	22
LA Galaxy	5	5	5	20	22	22
St Louis City	5	6	4	19	19	22
Portland	5	8	2	17	27	29
San Diego FC	4	6	5	17	30	27
Colorado	5	9	1	16	25	24
Austin FC	3	7	5	14	19	31
Sporting K.C.	3	10	2	11	16	39

Note: 3 pts. for win, 1 for tie

Thursday
Toronto FC 0, CF Montréal 0
Vancouver at Chicago ppd.
St Louis City 3, Sporting K.C. 2
Portland 5, Seattle FC 1

Friday
Atlanta at Nashville, 8:10pm
Los Angeles FC at LA Galaxy, 10:25pm

Wednesday
NYCFC at Columbus, 7:30pm
Red Bulls at Philadelphia, 7:30pm
Vancouver at Cincinnati, 7:30pm
Chicago at Miami, 7:30pm
Toronto FC at New England, 7:30pm
Atlanta at Charlotte FC, 8:15pm
Seattle FC at Austin FC, 8:30pm
D.C. United at Houston, 8:30pm
Minnesota at Sporting K.C., 8:30pm
CF Montréal at Nashville, 8:30pm
San Diego FC at Colorado, 9:30pm
St Louis City at LA Galaxy, 10:30pm
Salt Lake at Los Angeles FC, 10:30pm
FC Dallas at Portland, 10:30pm
Orlando City at San Jose, 10:30pm

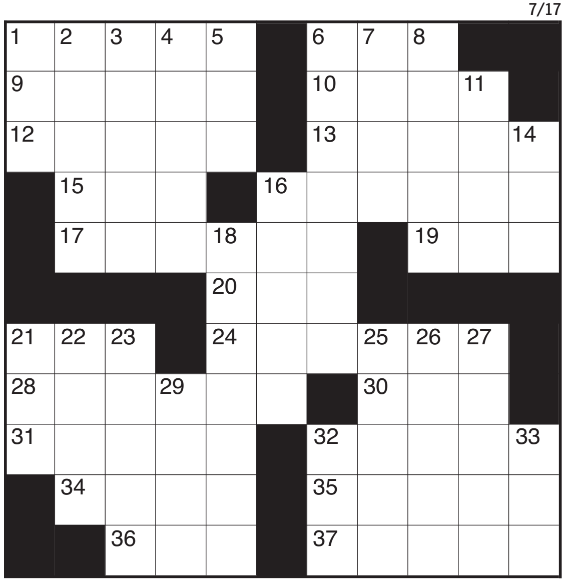
Saturday, July 25
Charlotte FC at **Red Bulls**, 6:30pm
Chicago at **NYCFC**, 7:30pm
Cincinnati at Columbus, 7pm
Toronto FC at D.C. United, 7:30pm
Miami at CF Montréal, 7:30pm
Atlanta at New England, 7:30pm
Nashville at Orlando City, 7:30pm
Seattle FC at Philadelphia, 7:30pm
Austin FC at Houston, 8:30pm
Vancouver at Minnesota, 8:30pm
Colorado at St Louis City, 8:30pm
FC Dallas at San Diego FC, 9:30pm
Sporting K.C. at Los Angeles FC, 10:30pm
Salt Lake at Portland, 10:30pm
LA Galaxy at San Jose, 10:30pm

NBA Summer League Schedule

Thursday
Golden State 87, **Knicks** 77
Houston 100, **Nets** 83
Dallas 97, Oklahoma City 87
L.A. Lakers 105, Chicago 82
Memphis 96, Atlanta 64
Toronto 99, Miami 90
Portland 108, Denver 101
Friday
Dallas vs. **Knicks**, 8:30pm
Sacramento vs. Charlotte, 6:30pm
Chicago vs. Cleveland, 7pm
Detroit vs. Miami, 9pm
Portland vs. Utah, 10:30pm
Minnesota vs. L.A. Clippers, 11pm

SPORTSCROSS

7/17



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ACROSS
1 Give a speech
6 Queensbridge rapper
9 Jen is the first female MLB regular season ump
10 Fido's food
12 Unsteady
13 Jock's straps
15 Ex-Met Davis
16 Street crosser
17 Met demoted to the bullpen in 2026
19 Sixth sense
20 "We — Family" Pirates
21 NY Apollo's lge.
24 Slow thrower for the Tigers & Texas 1977-86
28 Seats in Yankee Stadium
30 Out-of-control crowd
31 Bret Saberhagen
32 Climber's spike
34 Siebern in pinstripes
35 Luis went 18-3 for the ChiSox in the '50s
36 Joe pitched in six seasons 1995-2004
37 Home run contest

DOWN
1 OBP + SLG
2 NBAer Shareef Abdur- —
3 Cardinal Hayes star who was the 2021-22 Gatorade NY Player of the Year & went to the Final Four with Arizona
4 Old subway fare
5 Callaway of golf
6 BoSox backstop who was a Yankee minor leaguer for nine years (2016-24)
7 Toward shelter at sea
8 Kodai Senga injury in 2026
11 Burden of proof
14 Harness racing Hall of Famer Palin
16 Houston WHA team
18 Onetime Yankee & Met, he is the first player alphabetically on the list of all MLB players
21 Fool
22 Bahnsen broke in with the Yanks
23 Work hard
25 Boxing champ Griffith
26 Run fast
27 A-Rod homer per John Sterling
29 Roman emperor
32 Knee protection
33 No vote

SOLUTION IN SATURDAY'S POST

WNBA

East	W	L	Pct.	GB
Atlanta	14	10	.583	—
Indiana	14	10	.583	—
Washington	12	11	.522	1½
Liberty	13	11	.542	1
Toronto	10	14	.417	4
Chicago	8	16	.333	6
Connecticut	6	18	.250	8

West	W	L	Pct.	GB
Minnesota	19	6	.760	—
Golden State	18	7	.720	1
Las Vegas	17	7	.708	1½
Dallas	16	8	.667	2½
Los Angeles	10	13	.435	8
Portland	11	14	.440	8
Phoenix	8	17	.320	11
Seattle	6	20	.231	13½

Thursday
Liberty at Dallas, ppd
Portland 75, Washington 56

Friday
Atlanta at Toronto, 7:30pm
Los Angeles at Chicago, 7:30pm
Seattle at Indiana, 7:30pm
Connecticut at Phoenix, 10pm

Saturday
Liberty at Indiana, 8pm
Portland at Minnesota, 8pm
Washington at Golden State, 8:30pm

Sunday
Los Angeles at Dallas, 1pm
Chicago at Atlanta, 4pm
Connecticut at Phoenix, 7pm

FIFA World Cup

Third Place Playoff Game
Saturday
France vs. England, 5pm
FINAL
Sunday
Spain vs. Argentina, 3pm

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego	9	5	1	28	21	15
Washington	8	3	3	27	22	11
Portland	8	4	3	27	24	16
Gotham FC	**8**	**3**	**3**	**27**	**16**	**8**
Utah Royals FC	7	4	3	24	21	16
Kansas City	8	6	0	24	21	20
North Carolina	6	4	3	21	20	16
Orlando	6	7	2	20	21	20
Angel City	6	6	1	19	20	14
Seattle	5	6	2	17	13	16
Denver Summit FC	4	5	4	16	19	18
Boston Legacy FC	4	7	4	16	16	21
Houston	4	7	3	15	17	23
Bay FC	4	6	3	15	13	19
Chicago	4	10	0	12	8	28
Louisville	2	10	1	7	15	26

NOTE: Three points for victory, one point for tie.
Friday
San Diego at Kansas City, 8pm
Saturday
Seattle at **Gotham FC**, 12pm
Portland at Denver Summit FC, 2pm
North Carolina at Bay FC, 4pm
Angel City at Chicago, 6:30pm
Houston at Louisville, 8pm
Orlando at Utah Royals FC, 8:45pm
Sunday
Washington at Boston Legacy FC, 7pm
Friday, July 24
Bay FC at Houston, 8pm
Chicago at Orlando, 8pm
Gotham FC at Portland, 10pm

The POST Line

MLB
Friday

Favorite	Money Line	Underdog
Dodgers	-107-115	YANKEES
RED SOX-Gm. 1	$103-124	Rays
RED SOX-Gm. 2	OFF	Rays
BLUE JAYS	$113-137	White Sox
ASTROS	-106-110	Orioles
ANGELS	-104-112	Tigers
BREWERS	$127-156	Marlins
Reds	-104-118	ROCKIES
Cardinals	-104-112	D’BACKS
GUARDIANS	$105-129	Pirates
BRAVES	$175-217	Rangers
CUBS	$118-138	Twins
Padres	-109-113	ROYALS
ATHLETICS	-104-112	Nationals
MARINERS	$124-146	Giants

Home team in CAPS

FIFA World Cup
Saturday- 3rd-Place Match

Favorite	Money Line	Underdog
France	$155-225	England
game held in Miami Gardens, Fla.		
	Sunday- Final	
Spain	$120-165	Argentina
game held in East Rutherford, N.J.		

NBA Summer League
Friday

Favorite	PTS (O/U)	Underdog
Mavericks	3.5 (176.5)	KNICKS
Kings	1.5 (184.5)	HORNETS
CAVALIERS	1.5 (186.5)	Bulls
Pistons	1.5 (184.5)	HEAT
JAZZ	2.5 (186.5)	Trail Blazers
CLIPPERS	2.5 (187.5)	Timberwolves

all games held in Las Vegas

WNBA
Friday

Favorite	PTS (O/U)	Underdog
Dream	6.5 (181.5)	TEMPO
SKY	1.5 (184.5)	Sparks
FEVER	8.5 (174.5)	Storm
MERCURY	5.5 (163.5)	Sun

CFL
Friday

Favorite	PTS (O/U)	Underdog
ELKS	3 (61.5)	Lions
	Saturday	
Alouettes	1.5 (63.5)	STAMPEDERS
Argonauts	4.5 (55.5)	TIGER-CATS

SPORTS SHORTS

SOCCER: Wildfires postpone game

The air quality issues caused by the smoke from the Canadian wildfires postponed the Chicago Fire’s home game Thursday against the Vancouver Whitecaps. The club said the game was rescheduled to Oct. 6.

The game was originally scheduled to be the debut of star forward **Robert Lewandowski** for the Chicago Fire after joining from Barcelona last month.

● In Montreal, Toronto’s **Luka Gavran had** three saves and Montreal goalkeeper **Thomas Gillier** wasn’t tested in a scoreless draw in the MLS’ first match following the FIFA World Cup break.

● In St. Louis, **Eduard Lowen** converted a penalty for the eventual match-winner in the 86th minute, and St. Louis City recovered from a blown two-goal lead to defeat visiting Sporting Kansas City 3-2.

● A No. 10 jersey worn by Brazil icon **Pelé** in the 1958 World Cup final has been sold for $4.9 million, Sotheby’s said Thursday. Pelé, who died in 2022, was 17 when he scored twice in Brazil’s 5-2 win over host Sweden at the Rasunda Stadium and still remains the youngest player ever to score in a World Cup final.

MLB: Reds extend Burns’ deal

Pitcher **Chase Burns** has agreed to a seven-year, $105 million contract with the Reds that covers 2027-33, two people familiar with the deal told the Associated Press on Thursday.

Burns is 11-1 in 18 starts this season and the 23-year old right-hander was selected to the All-Star Game this season for the first time. Burns did not participate after tweaking his right groin during a July 8 game against Philadelphia.

NHL: Blues ink McMichael long term

Connor McMichael has signed a six-year, $40.5 million contract with the Blues. General manager **Alex Steen**, who took over the job from **Doug Armstrong** on July 1, announced the deal Thursday.

The 25-year-old forward joined the team after being traded for **Jordan Kyrou** last month and is coming off setting a career high with 32 assists and also scoring 14 goals in 78 games with the Capitals.

WNBA: Fire defense holds off Mystics

Carla Leite scored 14 points, **Serah Williams** had 12 points and the Portland Fire beat the Washington Mystics 75-56 on Thursday night in Washington. **Sarah Ashlee Barker** added 10 points to help Portland (11-14) avenge a quadruple-overtime loss to Washington on June 28.

GOLF: Clements, Gutierrez share lead

Todd Clements and **Ivan Cantero Gutierrez** each shot 7-under 65 at breezy Puntacana Resort to share the first-round lead in the Corales Puntacana Championship in the Dominican Republic.

Clements and Gutierrez are two of 50 European tour players in the field for the co-sanctioned event played opposite the British Open. They both missed the cut last week in Kentucky in the ISCO Championship.

TOP PLAY

Another W at Fen-Ray Park

By SEAN TREPPEDI

Only three weeks ago, the Red Sox were a punchline, dwelling in last place in the AL East and looking ahead to a fire sale at the trade deadline. But 14 wins in their past 16 games have them right back in the thick of the wild-card race.

Tampa Bay is 5-1 vs. the Red Sox this season, outscoring them by a 10-run margin. It’s a fundamentally sound baseball team that, while hitting a speed bump in June, rebounded with consistent run production, excellent defense and a lights-out rotation.

Boston’s encouraging rookie Jake Bennett (4-3, 2.64 ERA) gets the ball in the first game of Friday’s doubleheader at Fenway Park, opposing Griffin Jax (5-6, 3.47 ERA). There’s a lot to like about Bennett so far as the club’s No. 6 prospect has shown marvelous command and draws plenty of chases outside the zone.

The market is infatuated with the Red Sox, pricing them to -124 moneyline favorites at DraftKings. That screams inflation, especially considering All-Star Willson Contreras, their best hitter through their surge, is still serving out his suspension.

Not to mention they are snakebitten at Fenway with a 10-17 record there, the second-worst home mark in the majors.

The Red Sox may be on the up, but must prove more against a heavyweight like the Rays before warranting that kind of trust.

THE PLAY: Rays Game 1 moneyline (+103, DraftKings).

Pitching Form

		(Game time)	2026			'26 vs OPP		CAREER	LAST 3 STARTS		
			W-L	ERA	*REC	W-L	ERA	vs OPP	W-L	IP	ERA
Dodgers	Sasaki (R)		3-5	5.33	8-8	–	–	–	0-1	13.0	8.31
Yankees	Cole (R)	(7:05pm)	3-4	4.04	4-5	–	–	4-2	1-2	16.2	4.86
Pirates	Jones (R)		1-1	4.37	5-3	0-0	0.00	0-0	0-0	14.2	2.45
Guardians	Williams (R)	(7:10pm)	10-4	3.81	13-6	0-0	0.00	0-0	1-0	16.2	3.78
Rangers	Quantrill (R)		3-1	3.11	2-2	1-0	1.00	1-2	0-1	15.0	1.80
Braves	Sale (L)	(7:15pm)	9-6	2.20	10-7	0-0	0.00	9-2	1-1	14.0	2.57
Twins	Ober (R)		6-3	4.40	7-6	–	–	–	1-1	14.2	7.36
Cubs	Rea (R)	(8:05pm)	–	–	–	–	–	1-1	2-0	15.1	3.52
Padres	King (R)		6-7	3.41	8-11	0-0	0.00	0-1	1-1	16.1	3.86
Royals	Lugo (R)	(8:10pm)	3-6	4.56	8-11	0-0	1.42	2-0	0-1	14.1	6.91
Nationals	Cavalli (R)		5-4	3.83	7-13	–	–	0-0	1-0	15.1	2.93
Athletics	Jump (L)	(9:40pm)	3-4	3.51	4-5	–	–	–	0-3	13.1	7.43
Giants	Roupp (R)		6-8	4.27	6-12	0-0	0.00	0-0	1-1	16.2	4.86
Mariners	Miller (R)	(10:10pm)	4-3	2.18	4-5	0-1	6.75	0-1	1-2	17.2	3.57
Rays	Jax (R)		5-6	3.47	8-6	0-0	4.50	0-1	2-1	16.0	3.94
Red Sox	Bennett (L)	(1:35pm)	4-3	2.64	4-4	0-2	6.97	0-2	3-0	21.0	1.29
Rays	TBD		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Red Sox	TBD	(7:10pm)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
White Sox	Kay (L)		6-4	4.23	9-8	0-0	4.15	0-0	0-2	13.0	4.15
Blue Jays	Miles (R)	(7:15pm)	4-1	2.85	1-2	0-0	0.00	0-0	0-1	10.0	7.20
Orioles	Kremer (R)		1-2	4.09	2-2	–	–	4-0	1-2	17.0	4.24
Astros	Lambert (R)	(8:10pm)	8-5	3.14	9-6	0-1	4.39	0-1	2-1	17.1	2.60
Tigers	Melton (R)		5-1	1.82	6-2	1-0	2.70	1-0	1-1	17.2	0.51
Angels	Detmers (L)	(9:38pm)	3-6	4.39	8-11	–	–	0-3	0-1	14.2	7.36
Marlins	Alcantara (R)		10-5	4.00	13-7	0-1	3.60	2-2	2-1	20.2	3.92
Brewers	Henderson (R)	(7:40pm)	3-1	3.18	4-2	0-0	0.00	0-0	3-0	15.1	2.35
Reds	Singer (R)		3-9	4.72	6-12	0-0	4.26	2-0	0-3	16.2	4.32
Rockies	Hughes (R)	(8:40pm)	0-0	3.00	0-1	0-0	0.00	0-0	0-0	6.0	4.50
Cardinals	TBD		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
D'Backs	Kelly (R)	(9:40pm)	7-8	5.38	7-9	0-1	4.50	4-2	2-1	18.0	4.00

* **REC:** Won-lost record of pitcher's team in games he has started.

STITCHES

Roki? No, but I Love LA

“Sounds to me like you are not a soccer fan. But why continue to poke fun at the world’s most popular sport?” — Ray, Beechurst

“Recently you wrote Kiss has the same number of hits as the Jonas Brothers and Styx. Stick to baseball Stitches!” — Sean

Hope you guys were OK with the unhealthy air quality in New York. I hear it may affect “sensitive groups.”

October preview? The Dodgers are at Yankee Stadium. Roki Sasaki, generally listed at 187 pounds, but appearing to be a couple of sandwiches short of that mark, starts for L.A. Sasaki’s résumé (22 runs, last 23 innings) is just as thin. Gerrit Cole (14 runs, last 21 innings) is rounding into form. $50 on L.A.

-$

Can the Mets “do a 180” and turn their season around? No. But they showed up for us Thursday. Christian Scott shut out Philly for $5\frac{2}{3}$ innings. Francisco Alvarez took Aaron Nola deep twice and the Mets won 4-1. Down -216 clendenons.

stitches@nypost.com

NEW YORK POST ACTION

Home Team Lineups

HOME AWAY

	TODAY July 17	SAT July 18	SUN July 19	MON July 20	TUE July 21
	Dodgers 7:05 YES 660 AM 101.9 FM	Dodgers 8:08 Fox 660 AM 101.9 FM	Dodgers 7:20 NBC/Peacock 660 AM 101.9 FM	Pittsburgh 7:05 YES 660 AM 101.9 FM	Pittsburgh 7:05 YES 660 AM 101.9 FM
	NO GAME	Philadelphia 4:05 SNY 880 AM	Philadelphia 1:35 SNY 880 AM	Milwaukee 7:40 SNY 880 AM	Milwaukee 7:40 SNY 880 AM
	NO GAME	Indiana 8:00 CBS	NO GAME	NO GAME	NO GAME

Wednesday		Wednesday		Saturday	
	Philadelphia Union 7:30 Apple TV		Columbus Crew 7:30 Apple TV		Seattle Reign Noon ABC

Today's Sports on the Air

MLB BASEBALL		
1:30 p.m.	Rays at Red Sox	MLBN
7 p.m.	Pirates at Guardians	MLBN
7 p.m.	White Sox at Blue Jays	Apple TV
7:05 p.m.	Dodgers at Yankees	YES, 660 AM, 101.9 FM
10 p.m.	Cardinals at Diamondbacks (joined in progress)	MLBN
NBA BASKETBALL: SUMMER LEAGUE		
6:30 p.m.	Consolation Game Game: Kings vs. Hornets	Prime Video
7 p.m.	Consolation Game: Bulls vs. Cavaliers	ESPN
8:30 p.m.	Consolation Game: Mavericks vs. Knicks	MSG, Prime Video
9 p.m.	Consolation Game: Pistons vs. Heat	ESPN
10:30 p.m.	Consolation Game: Trail Blazers vs. Jazz	Prime Video
11 p.m.	Consolation Game: Timberwolves vs. Clippers	ESPN
WNBA BASKETBALL		
7:30 p.m.	Storm at Fever	ION
10 p.m.	Sun at Mercury	ION
MEN'S SOCCER		
8 p.m.	Atlanta United at Nashville SC	Fox
9:30 p.m.	USL League One: Portland Hearts of Pine at AC Boise	CBSSN
10:25 p.m.	LAFC at LA Galaxy	Fox
NWSL WOMEN'S SOCCER		
8 p.m.	San Diego Wave at Kansas City Current	Prime Video
MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL		
6:30 p.m.	Buffalo Bisons at Syracuse Mets	SNY
GOLF		
Noon	DP World/PGA Tour: Corales Puntacana Champ., 2nd Rd.	Golf
5 a.m. (Sat.)	DP World/PGA Tour: The Open Championship, 3rd Round	USA
AUTO RACING		
7:30 a.m.	Formula 1: Belgian Grand Prix, Practice	Apple TV
11 a.m.	Formula 1: Belgian Grand Prix, Practice	Apple TV
2 p.m.	NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series: FaithFest 250, Practice	FS2
3:05 p.m.	NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series: FaithFest 250, Qualifying	FS2
TENNIS		
6 a.m.	ATP Bastad: Quarterfinals	Tennis
6 a.m.	ATP Gstaad: Quarterfinals	Tennis
6 a.m.	ATP Umag: Quarterfinals	Tennis
6 a.m.	WTA Athens: Quarterfinals	Tennis
6 a.m.	WTA Iasi: Quarterfinals	Tennis
5:30 a.m.(Sat.)	ATP Bastad: Semifinals	Tennis
5:30 a.m.(Sat.)	ATP Gstaad: Semifinals	Tennis
5:30 a.m.(Sat.)	ATP Umag: Semifinals	Tennis
5:30 a.m.(Sat.)	WTA Athens: Semifinals	Tennis
5:30 a.m.(Sat.)	WTA Iasi: Semifinals	Tennis
SOFTBALL		
8 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited: Volts at Cascade	ESPN2
HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL		
9 a.m.	EYBL Peach Jam	NBATV
1:30 p.m.	3SSB Palmetto Road Championships	NBATV
HORSE RACING		
1 p.m.	Saratoga Live	FS2
4 p.m.	Saratoga Live	FS2
6:30 p.m.	Saratoga Live	FS2
8 p.m.	Opening Day at the Del Mar	FS1
AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL		
11 p.m.	Fremantle at Port Adelaide	FS2
2 a.m. (Sat.)	Melbourne at North Melbourne	FS2
CYCLING		
6:30 a.m.	UCI: Tour de France, Stage 13	NBCSN

ODDS & ENDS

WORLD CUP

Sunday Championship Spain vs. Argentina

3-WAY BETTING (90 minutes plus extra time)	ODDS
Spain	+125
Draw	+195
Argentina	+270

Saturday Third place France vs. England

3-WAY BETTING (90 minutes plus extra time)	ODDS
France	-110
Draw	+280
England	+280

Golden Boot

PLAYER	ODDS
Lionel Messi (Argentina)	-200
Kylian Mbappé (France)	+150
Harry Kane (England)	70/1
Jude Bellingham (England)	125/1

NFL

Week 1 moneylines Wednesday, Sept. 9

MATCHUP	ODDS
Patriots	+166
at Seahawks	-198

Thursday, Sept. 10

MATCHUP	ODDS
49ers	+176
vs. Rams	-210
at Melbourne, Australia	

Sunday, Sept. 13

MATCHUP	ODDS
Jets	+116
at Titans	-134
Cowboys	-152
at Giants	+128
Bills	-110
at Texans	-106
Bears	-138
at Panthers	+118
Browns	+320
at Jaguars	-405
Falcons	+124
at Steelers	-146
Saints	+295
at Lions	-370
Buccaneers	+176
at Lions	-210
Ravens	-200
at Colts	+168
Commanders	+180
at Eagles	-215
Packers	-112
at Vikings	-104
Dolphins	+176
at Raiders	-210
Cardinals	+440
at Chargers	-570

Monday, Sept. 14

MATCHUP	ODDS
Broncos	+124
at Chiefs	-146

BET SMART

'Du' it! Put your dollars on Dricus

Getty Images

SHOWDOWN IN OKC: Dricus Du Plessis (above) is the pick from The Post's Erich Richter to defeat Kamaru Usman in Over 4.5 minutes when the two former UFC champions meet Saturday night in Oklahoma City.

By ERICH RICHTER

It's been a roaring summer in mixed martial arts, and there's another strong card on tap this weekend.

After a disappointing main event at UFC 329, at which Conor McGregor lost due to a knee injury he sustained in the opening minute of the first round, we head to Oklahoma City with two former champions facing off.

Of the 12 scheduled fights, 10 have props available, and six of those fights are projected to end inside the distance.

The entire card begins at 5 p.m. and will stream on Paramount+.

Here are my UFC Fight Night Oklahoma City predictions:

Dricus Du Plessis vs. Kamaru Usman

It's an excellent main event this weekend in the middleweight division as Du Plessis takes on Usman in Du Plessis' first fight since he lost his championship at this weight.

Du Plessis is a cerebral fighter in this division who dissects opponents' game plans and excels at beating them with a mix of volume striking and grappling.

Usman is not typically a middleweight, traditionally fighting down at welterweight, where he was the reigning champion from 2019-22.

He's a legend, but Du Plessis is the guy whom I trust the most to snag a victory here.

Usman has bad knees. I suspect Du Plessis will chop down the 39-year-old's legs and could get a late KO here as a result.

Even if it goes the distance, Du Plessis should be the clear side to bet on, as Usman, an excellent wrestler, will be too small to grapple effectively.

Prediction: Du Plessis wins and Over 4.5 minutes (-160, DraftKings).

Jared Cannonier vs. Christian Leroy Duncan

At 42 years old, Cannonier returns for the first time since August as a massive underdog. Duncan, 30, is in his prime at this point in his career and has won four straight, including wins over Roman Dolidze and Marco Tulio.

It's a tough spot for Cannonier, as he was smashed on the feet by Michael "Venom" Page last time out and has looked noncompetitive against top-tier competition in recent years.

I'm taking the young gun to leapfrog the grizzled vet here, as Cannonier is on the wrong side of the age curve and Duncan should be coming into his own.

The favorite should roll.

Prediction: Duncan wins, and the fight starts Round 2 (-160, DraftKings).

Rest of the card

Chase Hooper vs. Mitch Ramirez: Hooper moneyline for parlays.

Tabatha Ricci vs. Fatima Kline: Fight goes the distance (-295, Caesars).

Tommy McMillen vs. Alberto Montes: Either fighter to win by KO/TKO (+200, Hard Rock).

Austin Bashi vs. Jose Miguel Delgado: Fight goes the distance (+120, DraftKings).

Jean-Paul Lebosnoyani vs. Seokhyeon Ko: Lebosnoyani by KO/TKO or submission (+400, FanDuel).

Levi Rodrigues Jr. vs. Felipe Franco: Franco moneyline (+134, Kalshi)

Alden Coria vs. Stewart Nicoll: Pass.

RJ Harris vs. Alvin Hines: Harris moneyline (+120, BetMGM).

Anna Melisano vs. Dione Barbosa: Fight goes the distance (+168, FanDuel).

Ezra Elliot vs. Damien Anderson: Over 1.5 rounds (-130, theScore Bet).

HOME SWEET SOON

One year from today, NYCFC finally will have a stadium to call their own

WHERE TO NEXT? Since their inception, NYCFC have been nomads, playing games at Yankee Stadium (above) and other places around town. That ends in 2027 with the opening of Etihad Park. Jason Szenes

By CHRISTIAN ARNOLD

New York City FC fans can officially save the date.

The club will play its first match at Etihad Park, NYCFC's state-of-the-art, soccer-specific stadium being built next door to Citi Field in Queens on July 17, 2027. Club CEO Brad Sims made the announcement Thursday during an MLS media event at league headquarters in midtown Manhattan.

The date gives the club a final countdown to when it finally ends the nomadic existence it has lived since its first season in 2015.

"First of all, it's a long time coming, right?" Sims said. "I got goosebumps ... announcing the first game because this is 12, 13 years in the making, and a lot of people put in so much hard work, time, effort, vetting out dozens and dozens of sites around the five boroughs. Starts, stops, good news, bad news, and just the support of the league, [MLS commisioner] Don [Garber] over the years, of the city and different stakeholders that we've had that have helped make this a reality."

Earlier this summer, the club confirmed that it would wait until the start of the new MLS calendar to move into the new building. MLS will move to a summer-to-spring schedule, which mimics that of the European soccer calendar.

The July date is also the first insight into when the 2027-28 MLS season will begin in its new form. The league will play a condensed sprint season that will go from February-May 2027 before the change.

New York City FC will play the sprint season split between Yankee Stadium and Citi Field, which have served as homes for the club over the past decade-plus.

"We've been a team that's been homeless," NYCFC defense Kevin O'Toole said during the event. "I think from us as players to the club to supporter group, everyone's super excited that I talk to. Right across the street from Citi Field, one of our previous homes, our official home, and a place where they can make it their own."

Sims noted that the official date also fulfills a promise that NYCFC made early on in its inception, maintaining its city identity.

"We're proud of the fact that we're the only professional sports team in New York City with City in the name," he said. "We knew it was going to be hard. It was harder than I think anyone thought it was going to be, but incredibly proud moment for us to kind of fulfill that promise that we made, and the fact that we kind of never gave up and were very persistent about that."

The MLS club won't be the only tenant in the new building.

Gotham FC announced earlier this month that it would move to the new Queens venue starting in 2028 after calling New Jersey home.

The stadium news wasn't the only announcement that NYCFC made Thursday, also announcing that O'Toole had signed a contract extension through the 2028-29 season with an option for the 2029-30 season.

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Post Time: **1:10 p.m.**
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Saratoga

Analysis by Vic Cangialosi

Lock of the Day
Red Square (1st)
Lock Record: 3 for 7 (43%)
Meet Record: 16/79 $89.92

1 5 1/2 fur(T); $115,000; mdn; 3up

Five turf races on the Friday card including the opener. **RED SQUARE** debuted a fast closing 3rd after missing the break at Churchill. Wins at 2nd asking, breaking better, racing longer. **HES MY KIND** is 0 for 2. About 1 1/2 lengths shy twice at Aqueduct. **BEIJING** is 0 for 2 as well. Ran 2nd in front of the compromised Red Square. Prat picks up the mount.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Shirl's Soul Town(M),126	J Ortiz	x-x-x	Rice	12-1
2	Red Square(L),122	I Ortiz, Jr	3-x-x	Ward	8-5
3	Beijing(L),122	F Prat	2-2-x	Walden	4-1
4	Onepac(L),126	E Zayas	9-3-3	Terranova II	20-1
5	He's My Kind(L),122	M Franco	2-4-x	Clement	3-1
6	Blazing Tiger(L),122	T Gaffalione	4-2-3	Clement	9-2
7	Frenchquarter Note(L),122	R Santana, Jr	5-x-x	Weaver	6-1

2 7 fur; $75,000; mdn clm($100,000); 3up

We have Irad winning both ends of the early double with **DISCOTHEQUE**. He's 0 for 16 after finishing a flat 4th at Churchill. Runnerup previous 3 starts; head shy at this distance. **REGENERATION** was 3rd at Churchill then 3rd again at Tampa, before going on the shelf in January. Prat rides for Chad Brown; blinkers on. **SIR DUKE** ran evenly for 3rd at 26-1 in his opener. Shorter price, 2nd time around, getting more ground. Gaffalione up.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Sir Duke(L),122	T Gaffalione	3-x-x	C Martin	4-1
2	Regeneration(L),122	F Prat	3-3-x	C Brown	5-2
3	Discotheque(L),126	I Ortiz, Jr	4-2-2	Sweezey	3-1
4	Old Time Rocknroll(M),122	D Davis	6-x-x	C Brown	6-1
5	Grand Gesture(L),126	J Alvarado	4-x-x	Mott	6-1
6	The Standard(L),122	J Ortiz	4-10-3	Asmussen	4-1
7	Sunshine Bobalou(L),122	C Gonzalez	5-x-x	Chichakly	30-1
8	Chess Match(L),122	K Davis	6-3-4	DeLauro	30-1

3 7 fur; $84,000; clm($62,500); 4up

No run from **RIDGEWOOD RUNNER** at Parx. Route to sprint and lower for Nevin. Won back-to-back races by a combined 19 lengths at Aqueduct last winter. Prat a good sign. **TWENTY FOUR MAMBA** won by 9+ lengths racing for 50k. Claimed by Abreu who keeps him at the same distance. **REDDINGTON** races off the 11 month layoff for Giangulio. 1 for 8 last year but in the money 7 of 10 at this distance.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Ridgewood Runner(L),121	F Prat	6-4-1	Nevin	7-2
2	Reddington(L),121	K Carmouche	3-3-3	Giangiulio	5-1
3	Unlimitedpotential(L),123	D Davis	1-3-4	Noda	4-1
4	Two Eagles River(L),121	I Ortiz, Jr	5-7-6	Sharp	7-2
5	Paradise Valley(L),123	S Gonzalez	6-1-3	Kantarmaci	12-1
6	Castle Chaos(L),123	M Franco	1-2-1	Kantarmaci	10-1
7	What's Up Bro(L),123	H Harkie	6-5-6	Follett	20-1
8	Twenty Four Mamba(L),123	R Santana, Jr	1-3-8	Abreu	3-1

4 5 1/2 fur; $90,000; mdn; 2YO(f)

Career debuts for many of these 2YO fillies. Going with **LEXIS CHARM** (Casse/Irad/Lexitonian) over **R KANT MISS** (Joseph/Gaffalione/Kantharos). **JUNEAU** finished well for 2nd racing 4 1/2 panels at Churchill. Stretches for McPeek. Two more who can win at 1st asking. **SEA ISLE CITY** (Brion/Prat/Jack Christopher) and **ATLAS A EYE** (R Mott/Franco/Highly Motivated).

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Freshly Minted,123	R Silvera	x-x-x	Rodriguez	20-1
2	Sea Isle City,123	F Prat	x-x-x	Brion	8-1
3	Belmont C. C.,123	L Saez	x-x-x	R Dutrow	15-1
4	Vu Jade,123	K Carmouche	x-x-x	Schultz	12-1
5	Lexi's Charm,123	I Ortiz, Jr	x-x-x	Casse	4-1
6	R Kan't Miss,123	T Gaffalione	x-x-x	Joseph	3-1
7	Goodproblemtohave,123	J Rodriguez	x-x-x	Green	8-1
8	Juneau,123	E Zayas	2-x-x	McPeek	9-2
9	Atlas a Eye,123	M Franco	x-x-x	Mott	6-1
10	Denos Grace,123	R Santana, Jr	5-x-x	Beckman	10-1

5 5 1/2 fur(T); $110,000; alw; 3up

Irad again. **VACATION DANCE** (Cox) was a wide, close 6th at 52-1 behind **TWISTED FILIGREE** (Weaver) who was 4th at 24-1. Both will be a shorter price today. Vacation Dance beat comparable company last November. Twisted Filigree's last win was at Saratoga more than a year ago. **BOSTONS PHINEST** picked up his 1st grass win from 6 starts last month. Repeat in cards under J Ortiz.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Boston's Phinest(L),121	J Ortiz	1-2-3	B Brown	5-1
2	Projectability(L),126	R Santana, Jr	3-1-1	Rice	8-1
3	Graywing(L),126	F Villa Pino	5-11-7	Jones	50-1
4	Disarmed(L),126	R Silvera	5-6-4	Rodriguez	15-1
5	Twisted Filigree(L),126	M Franco	4-7-5	Weaver	2-1
6	Vacation Dance(L),126	I Ortiz, Jr	6-6-5	Cox	5-2
7	Funny Factor(L),122	F Prat	7-1-3	Walden	6-1
8	Courtly Banker(L),126	K Davis	5-7-1	Tagg	5-1
9	Party in the Army(L),122	K Carmouche	3-1-1	Englehart	5-2
10	Anyway(L),122	M Franco	1-2-1	Rice	3-1
11	Jackson Heights(L),126	S Gonzalez	5-2-7	Kantarmaci	10-1
12	Kid Billy(L),126	Rider TBA	11-3-2	Rodriguez	8-1
13	New York Scrappy(L),126	F Prat	1-1-1	Kantarmaci	4-1
14	Beary Funny(L),126	Rider TBA	3-4-6	Rodriguez	12-1

6 1 3/8 miles(T); $125,000; alw; 3up

Taking a shot. Extreme longshot **WAITLIST** won on dirt in April but is 1 for 5 on turf. Hasn't been on the grass in 11 months but stretch runner gets more ground and a pace to chase. Rodriguez rides for Rice. **GEORGIA MAGIC** exits a handy wire-to-wire win. Again if we're off turf. **ARKHIPOV** beat **RIGHT TO VOTE** by a length in May. Both trained by Chad Brown. Right to Vote stretched to this distance and won narrowly next out. **NOBLE CONFESSOR** Runnerup this distance at Churchill in May and in a Grade 2 last year. Capable.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Waitlist(L),126	J Rodriguez	5-1-2	Rice	30-1
2	Right to Vote(L),126	M Franco	1-2-4	C Brown	5-1
3	Arkhipov(L),126	F Prat	1-4-1	C Brown	7-2
4	Emergence(L),126	I Ortiz, Jr	4-4-3	Cox	9-2
5	Mayor of Midnight(L),126	J Velazquez	3-6-1	Mott	6-1
6	Gilded Craken(L),126	J Ortiz	4-14-9	Sharp	6-1
7	End of Romance(IRE)(L),126	L Saez	4-3-5	Motion	8-1
8	The Hidden Chamber(L),126	E Zayas	6-11-1	Danner	12-1
9	Noble Confessor(L),126	T Gaffalione	2-1-8	Pletcher	6-1
10	Passing Game(L),126	K Carmouche	2-3-2	Hendriks	15-1
11	Harrow(L),126	D Davis	1-5-4	Joseph	8-1
12	Britain's Kitten(L),126	R Santana, Jr	2-4-1	Rice	8-1
13	Mutaawid(L),126	F Prat	2-1-5	Cox	5-1
14	Just a Fair Shake(L),126	L Saez	4-1-12	Sweezey	15-1
15	Dreamlike(L),126	M Franco	2-2-3	Rice	5-2
16	Georgia Magic(L),126	J Rodriguez	1-4-2	Schauer	7-2

7 1 1/8m; $42,000; clm($20,000); 3up

Look for **ANTIETAM** to rebound. Scored 2 back, then last of 7 next out. Slides lower for Rice who gets Irad to ride. **MIRAGE** closed to within 2 lengths racing a mile at Churchill. Gets another furlong. Note: lone W earned racing 6/8. **WHITBY** raced wide, gave way last out. Reported home 2nd in only start at this longer distance. Alvarado replaces Rodriguez who will ride **FIRST PITCH**.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Antietam(L),126	I Ortiz, Jr	7-1-2	Rice	5-2
2	Whitby(L),126	J Alvarado	4-2-5	Hennig	8-1
3	You're Lookin Good(L),121	J Ortiz	6-6-1	Green	8-1
4	Magnum's Macrobrst(L),121	D Rivera	1-7-7	Donk	15-1
5	Uncle Barrie(L),126	C Gonzalez	2-10-9	Metivier	30-1
6	Reside(L),121	K Davis	8-4-2	Potts	15-1
7	Geostoblame(L),121	K Carmouche	9-3-1	Pletcher	3-1
8	First Pitch(L),126	J Rodriguez	4-5-5	Jimenez	20-1
9	Mirage(L),126	R Santana, Jr	4-5-2	Casse	2-1

8 1 1/16 miles(T); $73,000; clm($40,000); 4up

ICE CHOCOLAT raced evenly, 3 lengths short at Woodbine. Sprint to route and lower for Casse. Hasn't won since he went gate-to-wire in the Grade 3 Poker here 2 summers ago but this may be a good spot to break through. J Ortiz was at the wheel in the Poker. **INEXORABLE** MTO. **BEEF WINSLOW** was 3 lengths short at Churchill. Rallied to win back-to-back races at Santa Anita earlier this year.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Classic Creation(L),121	D Davis	4-5-7	Terranova II	15-1
2	Ice Chocolat(BRZ)(L),123	J Ortiz	3-1-3	Casse	7-2
3	Belouni(FR)(L),121	J Rodriguez	8-2-3	Abreu	6-1
4	Beef Winslow(L),121	T Gaffalione	5-4-1	Hess	3-1
5	Heathguard(L),121	J Alvarado	7-5-5	Lerman	12-1
6	Presider(L),121	M Franco	7-8-10	Kantarmaci	12-1
7	Santorini(L),121	F Prat	3-7-7	Maker	5-1
8	Treaty Obligation(L),123	R Silvera	7-3-1	Rodriguez	20-1
9	Lou(L),121	C Elliott	8-8-5	Mann	30-1
10	Ocean Atlantique(L),123	I Ortiz, Jr	3-1-1	Sharp	4-1
11	Ambition(L),123	M Franco	4-5-2	Kantarmaci	15-1
12	Inexorable(L),123	I Ortiz, Jr	5-3-1	Rice	2-1
13	Pineapple Man(L),121	Rider TBA	2-1-4	Nevin	8-1
14	Three Technique(L),121	E Zayas	2-4-7	Kantarmaci	10-1
15	Power Seeker(L),123	R Silvera	7-1-4	Rodriguez	6-1
16	Brazenly(L),121	Rider TBA	9-3-3	Englehart	7-2

9 1 mile(T); $150,000; De La Rose; 4up(f)

The feature is the DeLaRose. Chad Brown's **SANDTRAP** is now 2 for 4 after turning in 3 lengths short in the Grade1 Just A Game. Back to business under Prat. **SCALABLE** MTO. **AWESOME CZECH** was a couple of lengths shy in the Gallorette at Laurel. Czech is an Awesome 4 for 5 at Saratoga. Won the Yaddo here last summer. **BEING BETTY** has won 2 in a row, latest in the Mount Vernon. Saez at a price. **PROCTOR STREET** Board hitter 10 of 12.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Salty Senorita,120	E Zayas	2-1-4	Maker	30-1
2	Hang the Moon,120	I Ortiz, Jr	4-2-1	Joseph	8-1
3	And One More Time,124	J Velazquez	5-1-5	Casse	4-1
4	Sandtrap(IRE),120	F Prat	6-1-x	C Brown	3-1
5	Table Flirt,120	J Alvarado	4-2-9	Mott	20-1
6	Long Ago(GB),120	K Carmouche	2-7-6	Morey	12-1
7	Proctor Street,122	T Gaffalione	2-3-3	Walsh	4-1
8	Awesome Czech,122	R Santana, Jr	6-3-2	De Paz	6-1
9	Deep Satin,122	J Ortiz	4-8-5	DeVaux	5-1
10	Being Betty,124	L Saez	1-1-2	Bartkowski	20-1
11	Scalable,124	Rider TBA	4-10-1	Pletcher	5-2
12	Bernietakescharge,124	M Franco	1-5-2	Schettino	4-1
13	With the Angels,124	J Ortiz	4-4-1	Rice	3-1
14	Going Steady,124	J Alvarado	1-2-6	Medina	12-1

10 6 1/2 fur; $42,000; clm($20,000); 3up(f)

OLIVIAS GRACE Turf winner is 0 of 1 on dirt but moves sharply lower for Mel Giddings. **DONNA ROMANO** makes 3YO debut for Brad Cox. 1 for 3 last year. The win at the Spa. 1st time lasix. **TENACIOUS CHILD** Turf to dirt for Weaver. 1 for 3 on dirt. Distant 5th racing for 75k last try. Prat a good sign.

PN	Horse Wt.	Jockey	Last 3	Trainer	Odds
1	Gresham's Law(L),126	D Rivera	8-1-11	Donk	30-1
2	Donna Romano(M),122	I Ortiz, Jr	4-6-1	Cox	2-1
3	Furry Fox(L),126	K Carmouche	5-6-5	Samsundar	20-1
4	Tenacious Child(L),122	F Prat	12-8-4	Weaver	3-1
5	Lady Delilah(L),126	R Santana, Jr	7-1-4	Ferraro	15-1
6	Undergrad(L),126	M Franco	5-6-6	Rice	10-1
7	St. Brigid's Cross(L),122	D Davis	8-6-3	Miceli	12-1
8	Will of a Womanne(L),126	E Zayas	4-3-5	Ferraro	12-1
9	Olivia's Grace(L),126	C Elliott	9-10-3	Giddings	6-1
10	Kay Road(L),122	R Silvera	1-2-4	Abreu	6-1
11	Admiral Sol(L),122	K Davis	4-7-4	Housel	30-1

PLAY OF THE DAY

We are rolling ... in the wrong direction. Irish Goodbye (5-2) lost ground after leaving the gate before rallying for 3rd. I'm Not Kidding (15-1) and Prairie Princess (7-1) finished off the board. Loss of -$54.

Two chances to snap the skid. Play $30 to win on Red Square in Race 1 and $4 across the board on Waitlist in Race 6. — *Vic Cangialosi*

Saratoga Results

FIRST-2 ³/₈miles; $75,000; Jonathan Kiser; 4p

1	Mr Prcy (IRE) (Wttrs)	7.18	3.60	3.08
3	Cyber Ninja (Bargary)		3.54	2.88
5	Lynches Knock (IRE) (Tierney)			5.78

● $1 Exacta (1-3) $13.42 ● $0.1 Superfecta (1-3-5-4) $37.37 ● $0.5 Trifecta (1-3-5) $34.37

SECOND-1 mile; $100,000; mdn spl wt; 3up

7	Tuning In (Zayas)	19.50	11.98	6.88
3	Bubster (Santana,Jr.)		8.30	5.04
4	Irish Goodbye (Franco)			2.92

Scr: Roadie

● $1 Daily Double (1-7) $39.47 ● $1 Exacta (7-3) $59.39 ● $1 Quinella (3-7) $26.81 ● $0.1 Superfecta (7-3-4-2) $60.53 ● $0.5 Trifecta (7-3-4) $144.05

THIRD-7 fur; $45,000; alw; 4up

4	Knshn Brdg (Frnc)	26.20	7.48	5.30
5	Tizmarkus (Santana,Jr.)		2.86	2.74
2	Smilensaycheese (Gutierrez)			8.90

Scr: Metatron's Muse, Thrill of It

● $1 Pick 3 (1-7-4) $738.76 ● $1 Daily Double (7-4) $127.38 ● $1 Exacta (4-5) $47.62 ● $0.1 Superfecta (4-5-2-3) $231.21 ● $0.5 Trifecta (4-5-2) $301.41

FOURTH-1 mile; $75,000; mdn cl($100,0); 3up

6	Chestr Boy (Frnco)	15.84	7.06	4.28
2	Alghero (Prat)		7.28	4.84
7	Mount Sopris (Carmouche)			5.92

Scr: Regeneration, StreamIt, DisparateImpact

● $1 Pick 3 (7-4-6) $1543.32 ● $1 Daily Double (4-6) $90.55 ● $1 Exacta (6-2) $55.94 ● $1 Quinella (2-6) $27.41 ● $0.1 Superfecta (6-2-7-8) $319.85 ● $0.5 Trifecta (6-2-7) $205.17

FIFTH-5½ fur; $115,000; mdn spl wt; 2YO F

13	Extrvgnzoo (Gffln)	6.62	4.12	3.28
3	All Star Leigh (Ortiz)		4.90	3.40
4	J'ray's Jewel (Alvarado)			2.86

Scr: The Paper Lady, Sitting On a Win, Blessednotbothered, Tappin Magic, Saint Dymphna, Miss Money Pants

● $1 Pick 3 (4-6-13) $593.85 ● $1 Daily Double (6-13) $37.39 ● $1 Exacta (13-3) $12.87 ● $0.1 Superfecta (13-3-4-1) $21.29 ● $0.5 Trifecta (13-3-4) $29.60

SIXTH-1 mile 1 fur; $115,000; mdn; 3upf

4	Ati Girl (Ortiz,Jr.)	4.82	2.70	2.26
6	Pippa Adds (Ortiz)		3.08	2.56
5	Moonlit (Rodriguez)			3.60

Scr: Morning Menace

● $1 Pick 3 (6-13-4) $101.83 ● $0.5 Pick 4 (4-6-9/10/11/13/14/15/16-1/4) $1112.46 ● $0.5 Pick 5 (7-4-6-9/10/11/13/14/15/16-1/4) $8298.76 ● $1 Daily Double (13-4) $9.29 ● $1 Exacta (4-6) $5.51 ● $0.1 Superfecta (4-6-5-7) $5.02 ● $0.5 Trifecta (4-6-5) $10.70

SEVENTH-1 1/16 mile; $55,000; cl($35,0); 3up

2	English Law (Prat)	6.30	4.12	3.58
10	Coach Case (Davis)		9.06	5.68
11	Chips and Fish (Franco)			10.74

Scr: I'm Worthy, Roscommon, Corvus

● $1 Pick 3 (13-4-2) $32.77 ● $1 Daily Double (4-2) $6.47 ● $1 Exacta (2-10) $26.81 ● $0.1 Superfecta (2-10-11-4) $571.12 ● $0.5 Trifecta (2-10-11) $301.99 ● $1 Pick 3 (13-4-2) $32.77 ● $1 Daily Double (4-2) $6.47 ● $1 Exacta (2-10) $26.81 ● $0.1 Show (2-10-11-4) $571.12 ● $0.5 Trifecta (2-10-11) $301.99

Winner picked by Vic C

EIGHTH-1 mile; $78,000; soc($75,000); 3YO

6	Mx Mony (SntnJr.)	8.12	5.20	3.32
1	Into the Light (Davis)		6.60	3.58
7	Palacios (Ortiz,Jr.)			2.78

Scr: Micanopy

● $1 Grand Slam (3/4/13-4/5/6-2/10/11-6) $23.87 ● $1 Pick 3 (4-2-6) $38.25 ● $1 Daily Double (2-6) $12.92 ● $1 Exacta (6-1) $22.87 ● $0.1 Superfecta (6-1-7-5) $18.94 ● $0.5 Trifecta (6-1-7) $27.01 ● $1 Pick 3 (4-2-6) $38.25 ● $1 Daily Double (2-6) $12.92 ● $1 Exacta (6-1) $22.87 ● $0.1 Show (6-1-7-5) $18.94 ● $0.5 Trifecta (6-1-7) $27.01 ● $1 Place Pick 9 (3/4/13-4/5/6-2/10/11-6) $23.87

Double picked by Vic C

NINTH-1 1/16 mile; $56,000; md cl($50,0); 3p

12	Islnd Chrm (Frnco)	10.44	5.38	3.60
2	Sky Low Low (Davis)		13.94	8.02
1	Intothewilderness (Ortiz,Jr.)			4.82

Scr: My Devine One, Force of Mischief, Not Tapping, Serena Fly

● $1 Pick 6 (6-13-4-2-6-12) $109.68 ● $1 Pick 6 (6-13-4-2-6-12) $10270.16 ● $1 Pick 3 (2-6-12) $84.99 ● $0.5 Pick 4 (4-2-6-12) $127.99 ● $0.5 Pick 5 ((X-COUNTRY P5) 3-2-1-6-12) $1684.17 ● $0.5 Pick 5 (13-4-2-6-12) $682.49 ● $1 Daily Double (6-12) $25.49 ● $1 Exacta (12-2) $72.89 ● $0.1 Superfecta (12-2-1-3) $186.20 ● $0.5 Trifecta (12-2-1) $176.36 ● $1 Pick 3 (2-6-12) $84.99 ● $0.5 Pick 4 (4-2-6-12) $127.99 ● $0.5 Pick 5 ((X-COUNTRY P5) 3-2-1-6-12) $1684.17 ● $0.5 Pick 5 (13-4-2-6-12) $682.49 ● $1 Pick 6 (6-13-4-2-6-12) $109.68 ● $1 Pick 6 (6-13-4-2-6-12) $10270.16 ● $1 Daily Double (6-12) $25.49 ● $1 Exacta (12-2) $72.89 ● $0.1 Show (12-2-1-3) $186.20 ● $0.5 Trifecta (12-2-1) $176.36

NEW HYPE MAN IN TOWN

FLAVOR OF FAME: Hampton University lacrosse player Matthew Drayton of Freeport carries a unique family legacy on the field. His grandfather is famed rapper Flavor Flav (inset with a young Drayton). Heather Khalifa; Drayton family

Grandson of Flavor Flav has eyes on pro lax career

By ALEX MITCHELL

Flavor Flav's grandson goes to his own beat.

Freeport's Matthew Drayton is starring on the lacrosse field without a need for any family name-dropping, but he shares similar larger-than-life dreams that his Long Island-born grandpa achieved while rapping with Public Enemy and beyond.

"He does wear a clock — and I'm fortunate for him to be my grandfather," the midfielder for Hampton University told The Post.

"But I'm making my own legacy… and I want to play professionally," Drayton added before flying to Las Vegas to party with Flavor Flav and the gold medal-winning U.S. women's Olympic hockey team.

The 20-year-old honed his gift for lax in high school, setting a single-season points record for the Red Devils with 74 during his senior year in 2023.

Grandpa Flav — a fellow Freeport alum and football player who was then known as William Jonathan Drayton Jr. — came back to see Matthew score his crowning goal.

"He's very grateful that I'm playing lacrosse, and he's seeing the journey that I'm on. But he always saw me as a football player," laughed Matthew, who was also a talented wide receiver in high school.

Harder than you think

Drayton keeps his lineage secret and hardly speaks about who his grandfather is as a way of making his own, nepotism-free mark on the athletic world.

"He's a hype man, he's a rock star, but that's something right now I'm not trying to achieve," said Drayton, who emphasized his drive to play professionally.

He didn't even mention the connection to the Hampton team staff, who only found out when one of Drayton's former coaches called them.

Getting to the Virginia school has been quite the journey, as Hampton is Drayton's third team since graduating from Freeport.

He started at St. Thomas Aquinas College, then returned to Nassau Community College before transferring on scholarship to his current HBCU for the 2026 season.

Playing with the Lions back on Long Island helped unleash the beast in Drayton, who was part of their national title run in 2025.

It still frustrates Drayton that Nassau lost 20-10 to Harford Community College (Md.) in that contest, as he was playing at a limited capacity.

"During the week of [the game], I got cut with a knife in both of my fingers," he said. "I had 16 stitches in both of my fingers, and I wasn't cleared by a doctor until the day of the national championship … the doctor said if I took a slap check to a finger, I could lose it."

Drayton has channeled that into a new goal with his new team — snapping a daunting 70-game losing streak that's rendered Hampton winless since 2019.

"I'm really on this mission of shocking the world. I live by 'shock the world,' " said Drayton, who is hopeful of being named captain next season.

"And we're going on a mission of winning our first Division I game in 13 years too."

Yeah BOYS!

Drayton gets by with a little help from his close friend — recent Alfred State grad and fellow middie Ryan Baston.

The childhood pals who played together at Freeport spend their summers training on Long Island at local parks and in leagues several days a week.

"I'm defensive-minded, he's offensive-minded," said Baston, the Pioneers' former captain.

"Iron sharpens iron," the 22-year-old added.

Just as Drayton is looking to make history at Hampton, Baston is looking for one last dance in lacrosse as a grad student at another school — should he have to wait a year for an academy class assignment with the NYPD, that is.

"He wants to be better," Drayton said. "He wants to come out here and work."

Baston, who plans to coach at Freeport after the NYPD, credits the training he's had with Drayton for earning second-team all-conference defensive midfielder last season.

"I'm extremely grateful," added Baston, who confessed he's too young to know Flavor Flav.

Regardless, Drayton said that his grandfather is all in on his kin's success and wants to help in fundraising efforts for HBCUs like Hampton. That's in addition to "lifting the culture" with celebrity status.

"He's proud of me. He says, 'Keep going.' He sees I'm working," Drayton said. "He knows the mission. He understands I'm trying to shock the world. He wants to shock the world too."

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Brink of PLL history

Rob Pannell is a lacrosse stick in the mud when it comes to being on the verge of setting the sport's all-time outdoor points record — but for the right reasons.

"I've never played lacrosse for things like this," the Maryland Whipsnakes attacker told The Post.

"I've always trained with the goal in mind of being my best on game day for my teammates and making sure that I'm not letting them down."

The 36-year-old icon from Smithtown has 654 career points and is on the verge of surpassing Professional Lacrosse League creator Paul Rabil's 657-point record set in 2021.

It could come as Maryland plays the California Redwoods on Friday night in PLL action.

"My plan is to try and do it this weekend. I'll have my family there, my wife and my parents, and it would be a really special moment," he said.

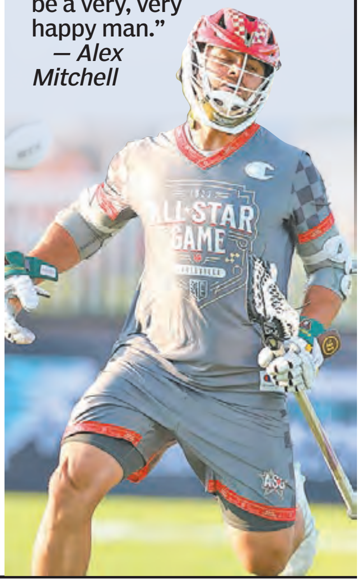
"I would love to get it over with," Pannell laughed.

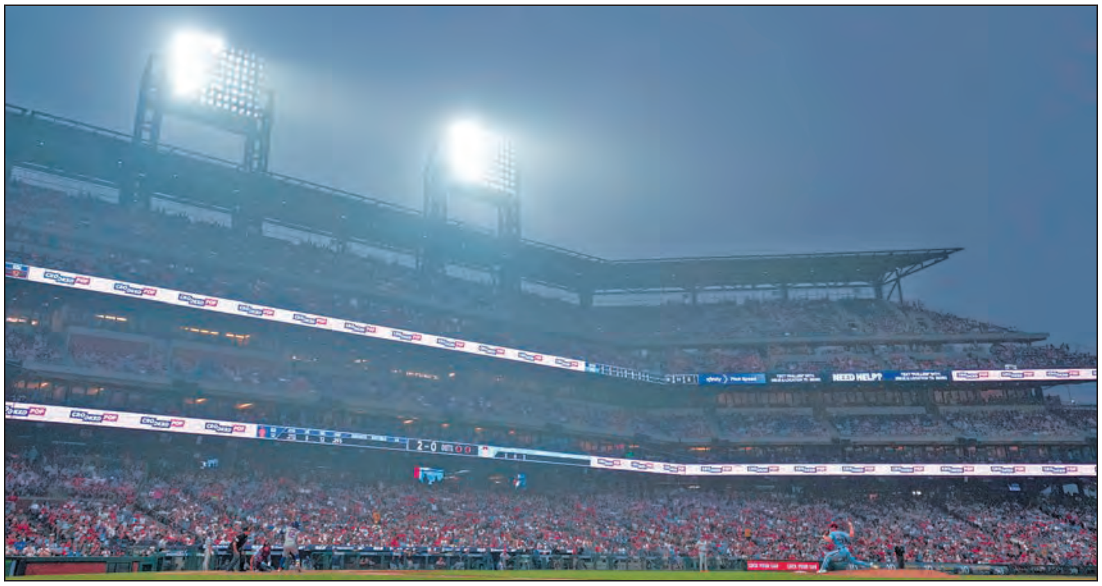
It's not that the honor of the scoring title is unappealing to the Long Island legend; he just has his sights set on a much more team-oriented ambition.

"I would say the number one thing is winning a PLL championship," said Pannell, who has won world titles and championships in Major League Lacrosse.

"That's the ultimate goal… If I can accomplish that, I'd be a very, very happy man."

— Alex Mitchell





CASTS A PALL: A cloud of smoke envelopes Citizens Bank Park on Thursday. Conditions got worse as the game wore on, with Francisco Alvarez saying it was “more difficult to catch and see” in the later innings. Getty Images

Smokescreen

Mets-Phillies conditions caused ‘burning’ eyes

By DAN MARTIN

PHILADELPHIA — There have been plenty of nights when people wouldn’t have wanted to see the Mets play.

On Thursday, they nearly got their wish as the smoke from the Canadian wildfires forced MLB to move up the start of the game and it may have paid off.

“I didn’t think it was bad til the last couple innings,” Brett Baty said after the Mets beat the Phillies 4-1 at Citizens Bank Park.

“My eyes were burning and itching a little bit,” Baty said. “[Carson] Benge said it felt like you were sitting by a campfire. It was fun ... but it didn’t feel great playing ball with it.”

Despite the adverse conditions, the game didn’t appear to be directly impacted.

Phillies manager Don Mattingly said, “It got almost, like, foggier. Guys didn’t seem to be having trouble.”

Home plate umpire and crew chief Dan Iassogna checked with players and the grounds crew throughout the game and play was never stopped.

Francisco Alvarez, who homered twice, said through an interpreter that “by the end of the game, it was a little more difficult to catch and see.”

That didn’t make it pleasant, as Christian Scott said it “got a little thick” on the field.

The smoke undoubtedly increased throughout the course of the game, but no one lost any fly balls.

As interim Mets manager Andy Green said when asked how the conditions may have affected the game, “I don’t think they really did. It felt like they could have at any moment, especially as visibility got tougher.”

Soto pulled early out of precaution

By DAN MARTIN

PHILADELPHIA — Calf injuries have already cost the Mets significantly this season, with both Juan Soto and Francisco Lindor missing time with them.

But interim manager Andy Green said after Thursday’s 4-1 win over the Phillies at Citizens Bank Park that even though Soto was removed before the bottom of the eighth with “a little left calf soreness,” the left fielder is expected to be back on the field “this weekend.”

Soto said after the game he felt it about halfway through the win, a game in which he reached base four times with a base hit and three walks.

And Soto added he intended to be in the lineup Saturday, when the Mets resume their series against the Phillies.

Green noted they pulled Soto, in part, because he didn’t have an All-Star break.

“He just played in the All-Star Game and had a lot of activity the last few days,” Green said. “It made sense to get him off his feet.”

Soto will get treatment Friday and they’ll see how he feels Saturday — and Green added Soto could have remained in the game, but “it didn’t make sense.”

METS NOTES

➤ **Clay Holmes** threw to **Marcus Semien** and **Luis Robert Jr.** in Brooklyn on Tuesday, as both Holmes and Robert get closer to returning.

Holmes (fractured right fibula) could begin a minor league rehab assignment after his next side session, although Green said there was no specific date set for the start of that assignment.

And Robert (lumbar disc herniation) is set to continue his minor league rehab assignment with Triple-A Syracuse on Friday and could be back with the Mets “relatively soon,” according to Green.

➤ **Francisco Lindor** made another uncharacteristic error in Thursday’s win. With **Bryce Harper** at the plate in the bottom of the sixth, the Mets caught **Kyle Schwarber** off second base.

Francisco Alvarez threw down to Lindor, but as Schwarber headed to third, Lindor bounced a throw to **Bo Bichette** and Schwarber was safe on Lindor’s error.

It ended up not costing the Mets. **Brooks Raley** walked Harper, but then got **Brandon Marsh** swinging to end the inning.

➤ If the 2027 season starts on time — a big if, considering the distance between MLB and the MLBPA with the current collective bargaining agreement set to expire in December — the Mets would open at Miami on March 25. Their home opener will be on April 2 against the Giants.

The first round of the Subway Series is scheduled to begin May 28 at Citi Field, with the Mets visiting the Yankees to open the second half on July 16.

The Mets are set to finish the season at home against the Cubs, with the final game on Sept. 26.

Top draft pick Dietz looking forward to unlocking potential

By GREG JOYCE

Entering his redshirt sophomore season at Arkansas, Hunter Dietz had thrown just 1 $^{2}/_{3}$ innings in his college career because of a stress fracture in his left elbow.

But across 16 starts this spring, the left-hander gave the Yankees plenty of reasons to be excited about drafting him with their first-round pick (No. 35 overall) last weekend and betting on his upside as they try to inject more talent into their system.

“There’s a lot of gears that I can hit in my game going forward,” Dietz said Thursday on a video conference call after signing for a reported below-slot value of $2,497,500. “There’s a lot of potential that I need to unlock. I just feel like this staff is perfect for me, once I start my buildup, just to get ready for next year and the coming outings that I’m going to have. I feel like it’s just perfect for me as a player.”

Unbeknownst to Dietz, the Yankees have actually been following him since he was in high school at Calvary Christian — not far from their player development complex in Tampa — but then this spring saw him become “what we thought he would be out of high school,” vice president of domestic amateur scouting Damon Oppenheimer said this week.

The 6-foot-6, 235-pound Dietz pitched to a 3.57 ERA for the Razorbacks while striking out 131 in 85 $^{2}/_{3}$ innings.

“I feel like it just shows who I am as a pitcher, finally getting healthy after the one injury at the end of my freshman year and struggling mechanically my sophomore year,” Dietz said. “Piecing it all together and having a great year, I feel like this year was just kind of the floor for me. I’m just going to keep getting better and better, especially with the Yankees staff by my side.”

Dietz said he has gotten comparisons to current Yankees lefty Carlos Rodón, who he recently got some advice from after meeting him in the club’s Tampa facility a few days ago.

Since 2020, most of the pitchers the Yankees have drafted have spent the rest of that year working out at the player development complex before being sent to an affiliate the following year, which is likely the path Dietz will take.

“Big, powerful left-handed pitcher,” Oppenheimer said. “He’s big, strong, fits our mold. He’s got a big fastball that’s up to 98, it’s got movement. He’s got a slider that’s basically a wipeout strikeout pitch. And a curveball that we think can be developed. ... The control just keeps getting better. Ecstatic that we were able to get this where we picked and have this top end of the rotation ceiling.”

YANKEES NOTES

➤ The Yankees will begin the second half with **Gerrit Cole** starting on Friday (against **Roki Sasaki**), **Ryan Weathers** on Saturday (**Emmett Sheehan**) and **Cam Schlittler** on Sunday (**Yoshinobu Yamamoto**) in their showdown with the Dodgers.

➤ If there is actually a 2027 season and it starts on time — with a labor war and likely lockout threatening to disrupt that — the Yankees are scheduled to open the season at home against the Blue Jays on March 25.

The schedule also includes home games on Memorial Day (Royals) and Independence Day (Astros), hosting the Mets on July 16-18 and playing them at Citi Field on May 28-30.

Phil Mushnick

EQUAL TIME

MIDSUMMER MUSINGS

Wishing All-Star break could give us break from sports' endless idiocy

SWING & AMISS: As Giancarlo Stanton — taking a swing against the Sawx in April — nears his return, Phil Mushnick wonders how the slugger can "resume running" in his rehab process if he never runs to begin with. Jason Szenes

IN THE history of sportswriting, there has never been a funnier line written than the one that appeared, at least for a third time, this week:

"Giancarlo Stanton has been given the go-ahead to resume running."

Hysterical. How can a sloth resume running?

If Stanton had chosen to run even moderately hard to first base rather than jog, he wouldn't have been self-victimized by delayed starts to second base, where his awkward, unschooled slides left him both tagged out and disabled for months.

And he wouldn't have jogged a double into a single high off the left-field wall in Fenway during a *playoff game* the Yankees lost.

Of course, at $30 million per as designated spectator, what can one expect? A modicum of desire? A flake of professionalism?

Still, every chance provided, including choosing silence when TV allows silence to be the most circumspect choice, YES's Michael Kay — who recites any arcane stat about anything and everything — marvels at Stanton's "exit velo." But that works both ways.

As for YES, reporter and injury update assignee Meredith Marakovits provided a relevant one when she reported in a pregame show that shortstop Anthony Volpe is livid over a bogus report that he refuses to play second base, a report since retracted by its source.

She did not, however, include the speaker of that bogus report: YES teammate Michael Kay. Must've slipped her mind.

But such is the state of sports, and just about everything else. It's all a con.

MLB's All-Star Game again became as meaningful and memorable as the NFL's deceased-by-popular-remand [cq] Pro Bowl.

All-Stars again found reasons to avoid "The Midsummer Classic" for vague reasons such as "arm fatigue" and suspected maladies that trigger "just not interested" afflictions. The "classic" has become a nuisance.

MLB has made the AL vs. NL spectacle a homogenized carton of "What else is on?" This week's included 27 strikeouts and the NL's best batters — whiff-or-blast swingers — combined for three hits. It was modern baseball imitating modern baseball.

And while Cody Bellinger won the MVP — a two-run single was all it took to win an award named for Ted Williams — reader George B. nominated Fox's John "Sominex" Smoltz as he "dominated the night."

Reader Joseph Napoleone: It felt as if we were forced to watch "a Sherwin Williams vs. Benjamin Moore dry-off."

The Home Run Derby belonged where it was — on ESPN, the perfect spot for gimmicks hyped and posed as sports. But this year MLB sold it to double-pay Netflix, thus minimizing its audience by tens of thousands of viewers who no longer wish to pay for cheap thrills, if available.

And, according to a bunch of readers, the telecast signal often broke, replaced with a dark screen, though all the commercials appeared clearly and in full.

That children of all ages were shut out by greedy design didn't matter to Rob "Kids are our highest priority" Manfred.

As for ESPN, we've been reliably told that more layoffs will occur next week, as the cost of garbage — pro wrestling, absurd graphics, Stephen A. Smith, Pat McAfee and daytime shows that this week debated whether "Patrick Mahomes should be rated ahead of Josh Allen" — are through Disney's roof.

And perhaps the come-on for suckers via ESPN BET has not produced (or broken) as many suckers ESPN had promised itself. "All-Sports Network," my arse.

The World Cup has provided nonstop evidence that play-by-play and color analysts who can't cease talking — English and Spanish — is an international epidemic, as are intrusive graphics that carry irrelevant data.

For crying out loud, midfield possessions don't need a description nor a graphic gauging "momentum."

The Michael Kay-Joe "Good point, Michael" Girardi Yankees TV team remains insufferable. Stats that have little or nothing to do with what we're watching are flung at us as if we demand them. And, still, there is no exec at YES to tell Girardi to take a pitch off.

Saturday, after Volpe was thrown out at second on a great throw by Nasim Nuñez, who backed up the play, nailing Volpe trying to advance on a wild throw, Girardi gave Nuñez all due credit.

But then he didn't stop! Three times he analyzed the self-evident as if he'd stolen the plans to the Battle for Gallipoli. Enough!

He also chooses to say anything when nothing is the smart move. Sunday, after Will Warren retired a National with one out in the fifth, Girardi: "Now he has a chance to get out of the inning if he doesn't give up a hit."

Really, Joe? If I tapped you on the shoulder to tell you that, I'd then duck as I'd expect you to slug me!

Then there was the endless Kay and Girardi spiel about late-inning "high-leverage relievers."

Having only heard such a term in recent seasons — it arrived in the same shipment with Gary Cohen's "backdoor sweepers" — it struck neither that *any* pitcher brought in to a close game, regardless of the inning, is a "high-leverage" pitcher!

Then there was that bad joke, the Conor McGregor street fight that promised blood for those who subscribed to the Paramount+ streaming thingy.

At 38, McGregor's bio is devoid of human credibility, unless a drunken, vulgar, convicted sexual-assaulting thug is all it takes. McGregor lasted 30 seconds, surrendering to a previous leg injury. Refunds are in the mail. Sure, they are.

This week, with the Olympics two years out, NBC News — its anchors are dispatched to cover international news from the site of all its proprietary Olympics, including standing outside beneath snow-covered mountains — included an Olympic come-on posed as topical news.

It's all a con. Hey, I just work here.

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Replay it again ... and again

SUNDAY'S Yankees game was stopped cold — and for a long time — to rule on microscopic, freeze-frame evidence as to whether the Nationals runner was safe at first as called.

After reviewing four replays, **Joe Girardi** and **Michael Kay** agreed that the Nationals runner was safe and that the decision was too long in being reached. At the very least, it was far too close to be overturned.

But it was overturned; runner was out. And once again a rule designed only to be applied to treat egregiously wrong calls was used as totally and overwhelmingly unintended, changing the outcome of the game to no known extent.

Isle be missing this former captain on LI

GONNA miss ex-Islanders captain **Anders Lee**, who has departed for Utah. Lee was a mensch, easy to root for.

➤ Your PSL "Good Investment" money at work: New/old Jets starting QB **Geno Smith**, so far three times this offseason busted by cops — one time for alleged sexual assault — has finished his new book, "How I Spent My Summer Vacation."

➤ NBC golf host **Dan Hicks** is another pandering space-filler who chooses to say anything. As **Patrick Cantlay** appeared on the practice green, he said that his putter "is going to be a key club for him today." As opposed to whom?

MushnickPhilip@gmail.com

Power, politics, and the stories behind the headlines.

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Breaking down slate that awaits Blueshirts this fall

By MOLLIE WALKER

The Rangers will be thrust into the 2026-27 season with three games in the first four nights of the new campaign.

That includes an immediate back-to-back slate for Games 2 and 3: the Rangers' home opener against the Lightning on Oct. 1 before a visit to Detroit for the Red Wings' opener on Oct. 2, according to the NHL's release of all 32 teams' schedules Thursday.

It's one of 11 sets of back-to-backs in the Blueshirts season, including three in January alone.

After their second lengthy offseason in a row, the Rangers will no doubt be itching to get started. Five games within the first week of the season should get the team mentally involved quickly.

Longest road trip

With only one true four-game road trip on their schedule, the Rangers will get it out of the way early.

The Rangers will venture to Seattle, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver in early November, spending a week out in the Northwest and marking their longest stretch on the road. While they are technically on the road for four straight games from Feb. 18-23 as well, Long Island and Philadelphia are the first destinations.

The swing out in California is a shorter trip than usual, with the Rangers beginning in San Jose on Jan. 9. They will then square off against the Kings and Ducks in a back-to-back slate on Jan. 11 and 12.

It will be the first time the Rangers face Artemi Panarin in his new domain in Los Angeles.

Longest homestand

The Rangers have five straight games at Madison Square Garden scheduled from Nov. 28-Dec. 7. During that stretch, the Blueshirts will face a mix of opponents in the Flames, Hurricanes, Sharks, Avalanche and Devils.

There are also two four-game homestands before the Rangers cap the season with three in a row at MSG against the Panthers, Penguins and Maple Leafs.

Notable games

The last time the Rangers were in Boston, the team was in the midst of a nightmarish January and were embarrassed 10-2 to make it six losses in their last seven games. It's only fitting for the Blueshirts to open a new season in a building that saw them at some of their worst in a lost 2025-26 campaign.

The Rangers will go head-to-head with the 2026 Stanley Cup champs, the Hurricanes, twice at MSG in the span of nine days. After squaring off with the Rangers in an afternoon matinee on Nov. 22, the Canes are back in New York for more on Nov. 30.

Familiar faces

The Blueshirts faithful and MSG will get to welcome Vincent Trocheck back to Manhattan quite early in the season.

Trocheck and the Mammoth will be in town Oct. 4. It is sure to be a meaningful night for the veteran center, who spent the last four years with the Rangers before he was traded to Utah this summer.

Will Borgen and the Bruins will also be the Rangers' first opponents of the season.

While it's not guaranteed, the Rangers could potentially see Brett Berard with the Canadiens and Adam Edstrom with the Predators at some point next season. The Blueshirts are scheduled to face the Habs on Nov. 16 and Feb. 14. The Predators are in New York on Dec. 18 before welcoming the Rangers to Nashville on March 23.

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Top takeaways from Islanders schedule

By ANDREW CRANE

While it's not the NHL's official Opening Night, a semblance of spotlight will still follow the Islanders to Toronto on Sept. 30.

That'll serve as their season opener and the beginning of Peter DeBoer's first full season as head coach, but it also doubles as the first showdown of the last two No. 1 overall picks, with defenseman Matthew Schaefer (2025) facing Gavin McKenna (2026) in the second game of McKenna's career. Schaefer — a Hamilton, Ontario, native — will return to the NHL city closest to his hometown after having an estimated 1,000 people in attendance for the Islanders' lone Toronto game last year. The Islanders will return to Scotiabank Arena less than three weeks later on Oct. 17.

Three days after the season begins, the Islanders will host the Devils in their UBS Arena opener, according to the 84-game slate released Thursday. Here are some additional takeaways from the schedule.

Longest road trips

Sandwiched around the Long Island-based All-Star Game festivities in early February, the Islanders will spend three weeks without a game at UBS Arena during a six-game road trip. It'll feel a bit different with the break following the fifth game (Feb. 3 in Buffalo), but that'll mark the Islanders' longest stretch of the season for consecutive road games. They'll face the Penguins, Hurricanes, Lightning, Panthers, Sabres and Rangers.

Earlier in January, the Islanders will also embark on their final West Coast swing, playing the Kraken, Canucks, Flames and Oilers from Jan. 2-9. They'll go two weeks without a home game. That, technically, will serve as their second-longest road trip, but it'll likely be the most grueling one.

Longest homestands

The Islanders won't officially have anything longer than a three-game homestand until March 1-9, when they host the Capitals, Golden Knights, Penguins and Canadiens. But they also close the regular season with six of their final eight games at UBS Arena — all against Eastern Conference teams. They also have a trip to Boston that splits up four home games from Dec. 20-30, and later stretch of two home games, a visit to New Jersey and two more home games from Jan. 13-20.

Notable games

The Islanders don't have to wait long for their first rivalry game as they'll host the Devils in their home opener and then face the Rangers at the Garden one game later on Oct. 6. Additional rivalry games include matchups with the Rangers on Dec. 20, Feb. 12 and Feb. 18, while the Islanders will also face the Devils on Nov. 7, Jan. 16 and April 8.

The DeBoer-led Isles head to Dallas — the last spot he coached before getting fired after the 2024-25 campaign — to face the Stars on Oct. 25. The Islanders have 13 back-to-backs, with the first being Nov. 27-28. Furthermore, the club has 12 games that start at 5 p.m. or earlier.

Familiar faces

A Presidents' Day matinee on Feb. 15 might serve as their most emotional game. That's when Anders Lee, their former captain who departed for the Mammoth in free agency, will return to Long Island. The Islanders will also face Lee on Dec. 15 in Utah. Defenseman Noah Dobson, sent to Montreal last summer and injured when the Canadiens made their lone visit last year, will get a chance to finally skate in his old arena March 9 and April 4.

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RANGERS 2026-27 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME	DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Sep. 29	at Boston	8:00	Jan. 5	at Columbus	7:00
Oct. 1	vs. Tampa Bay	7:00	Jan. 7	vs. Chicago	7:00
Oct. 2	at Detroit	6:30	Jan. 9	at San Jose	10:00
Oct. 4	vs. Utah	6:00	Jan. 11	at Los Angeles	10:00
Oct. 6	vs. Islanders	7:00	Jan. 12	at Anaheim	10:00
Oct. 9	at Washington	7:00	Jan. 16	vs. Boston	12:00
Oct. 11	vs. Vancouver	6:00	Jan. 17	vs. Dallas	6:00
Oct. 13	vs. Tampa Bay	7:15	Jan. 19	vs. Philadelphia	7:00
Oct. 15	at Devils	7:00	Jan. 21	at Winnipeg	8:00
Oct. 17	at Columbus	7:00	Jan. 23	at Minnesota	8:00
Oct. 19	vs. Anaheim	7:00	Jan. 25	vs. Seattle	7:00
Oct. 22	at Toronto	7:00	Jan. 27	vs. Florida	7:30
Oct. 24	at Ottawa	7:00	Jan. 29	at Pittsburgh	7:00
Oct. 26	vs. Los Angeles	7:00	Jan. 30	at Ottawa	7:00
Nov. 1	vs. Edmonton	6:00	Feb. 3	vs. Winnipeg	7:30
Nov. 3	vs. St. Louis	7:00	Feb. 12	vs. Islanders	7:00
Nov. 5	vs. Philadelphia	7:00	Feb. 14	at Montreal	1:00
Nov. 7	at Seattle	5:00	Feb. 15	vs. Buffalo	3:00
Nov. 9	at Edmonton	8:00	Feb. 18	at Islanders	7:00
Nov. 11	at Calgary	7:30	Feb. 20	at Philadelphia	12:00
Nov. 13	at Vancouver	9:00	Feb. 21	at Carolina	1:00
Nov. 16	vs. Montreal	7:30	Feb. 23	at Washington	7:00
Nov. 22	vs. Carolina	1:00	Feb. 26	vs. Washington	7:00
Nov. 25	at Buffalo	7:00	Feb. 28	at Pittsburgh	1:00
Nov. 27	at Chicago	5:30	March 3	vs. Boston	7:00
Nov. 28	vs. Calgary	7:00	March 6	at Buffalo	3:00
Nov. 30	vs. Carolina	7:00	March 7	vs. Vegas	6:00
Dec. 3	vs. San Jose	7:00	March 9	at Utah	9:00
Dec. 5	vs. Colorado	7:00	March 11	at Colorado	9:30
Dec. 7	vs. Devils	7:00	March 13	at Vegas	10:00
Dec. 8	at Carolina	7:00	March 16	vs. Ottawa	7:00
Dec. 11	at Detroit	7:00	March 18	vs. Toronto	7:00
Dec. 13	vs. Columbus	6:00	March 20	vs. Pittsburgh	8:00
Dec. 15	at Devils	7:00	March 21	vs. Washington	7:00
Dec. 16	at Philadelphia	7:30	March 23	at Nashville	8:00
Dec. 18	vs. Nashville	7:00	March 25	at Florida	7:00
Dec. 20	at Islanders	7:00	March 27	at Tampa Bay	7:00
Dec. 22	vs. Devils	7:00	March 29	vs. Minnesota	7:00
Dec. 27	at St. Louis	5:00	April 1	at Montreal	7:00
Dec. 29	vs. Detroit	7:00	April 3	vs. Florida	12:00
Dec. 31	at Dallas	9:00	April 6	vs. Pittsburgh	7:30
Jan. 3	vs. Columbus	6:00	April 10	vs. Toronto	7:00

ISLANDERS 2026-27 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME	DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Sep. 30	at Toronto	7:30	Jan. 7	at Calgary	8:00
Oct. 3	vs. Devils	7:30	Jan. 9	at Edmonton	3:30
Oct. 6	at Rangers	7:00	Jan. 13	vs. Pittsburgh	7:30
Oct. 8	vs. Chicago	7:30	Jan. 15	vs. Dallas	7:00
Oct. 10	vs. Tampa Bay	7:30	Jan. 16	at Devils	7:00
Oct. 13	vs. Vancouver	7:45	Jan. 18	vs. Nashville	3:00
Oct. 15	at Ottawa	7:00	Jan. 20	vs. Buffalo	7:00
Oct. 17	at Toronto	7:00	Jan. 22	at Washington	7:00
Oct. 20	vs. Anaheim	7:00	Jan. 23	vs. Seattle	7:30
Oct. 22	vs. Los Angeles	7:30	Jan. 26	at Pittsburgh	7:00
Oct. 25	at Dallas	6:00	Jan. 28	at Carolina	7:00
Oct. 27	at Nashville	8:00	Jan. 30	at Tampa Bay	7:00
Oct. 29	at Minnesota	8:00	Feb. 1	at Florida	1:00
Oct. 31	vs. Edmonton	3:30	Feb. 3	at Buffalo	7:00
Nov. 5	vs. Carolina	7:00	Feb. 12	at Rangers	7:00
Nov. 7	vs. Devils	7:00	Feb. 13	vs. Minnesota	7:00
Nov. 9	at San Jose	10:00	Feb. 15	vs. Utah	3:00
Nov. 12	at Los Angeles	10:00	Feb. 18	vs. Rangers	7:00
Nov. 14	at Anaheim	10:00	Feb. 20	at Montreal	7:00
Nov. 17	vs. Columbus	7:00	Feb. 22	at Columbus	7:00
Nov. 19	at Winnipeg	8:00	Feb. 23	at Chicago	8:00
Nov. 21	at Detroit	7:00	Feb. 26	vs. Philadelphia	7:00
Nov. 23	vs. Toronto	7:30	Feb. 27	at Columbus	7:00
Nov. 25	vs. St. Louis	7:00	March 1	vs. Washington	7:00
Nov. 27	vs. Winnipeg	7:30	March 4	vs. Vegas	7:00
Nov. 28	at Philadelphia	7:30	March 7	vs. Pittsburgh	1:00
Dec. 1	vs. Florida	7:00	March 9	vs. Montreal	7:00
Dec. 3	at Philadelphia	7:00	March 12	at Florida	7:00
Dec. 4	vs. San Jose	7:00	March 13	at Tampa Bay	7:00
Dec. 7	vs. Colorado	1:00	March 15	at Boston	7:00
Dec. 10	vs. Calgary	7:00	March 17	at Washington	7:00
Dec. 11	at Carolina	7:00	March 20	vs. Philadelphia	3:00
Dec. 15	at Utah	9:00	March 21	vs. Buffalo	3:00
Dec. 16	at Colorado	9:00	March 25	vs. St. Louis	8:00
Dec. 18	at Vegas	10:00	March 27	vs. Detroit	7:30
Dec. 20	vs. Rangers	7:00	March 30	vs. Carolina	7:00
Dec. 22	vs. Boston	7:00	April 1	at Pittsburgh	7:00
Dec. 26	at Boston	7:00	April 2	vs. Ottawa	7:00
Dec. 27	vs. Ottawa	7:00	April 4	vs. Montreal	7:30
Dec. 30	vs. Washington	4:00	April 6	vs. Detroit	7:30
Jan. 2	at Seattle	10:00	April 8	at Devils	7:00
Jan. 5	at Vancouver	9:00	April 10	vs. Columbus	5:00

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HUNGER FOR MORE: Jalen Brunson, speaking during WSJ Sports: The Next Sports Economy on Thursday and sporting a cast after wrist surgery last week, acknowledged the Knicks must learn how to defend their new NBA title, rhetorically asking, "How are you going to remain hungry?"

Getty Images

RINSE & REPEAT

New challenge for Brunson, defending champs to 'forget' Knicks' glory to chase more

By BRIAN LEWIS

For the Knicks, winning the title already was tough.

Defending it will be even harder.

"It will be different, for sure," star Jalen Brunson admitted Thursday at the event WSJ Sports: The Next Sports Economy. "Obviously, for the first eight years I went through disappointment, obviously losing at the end of the season. And now winning, I think it's an even bigger challenge. Now, it's a target on your back. Now, players and teams have changed, they've gotten better.

"So, how are we going to evolve as a team? How are we going to figure out what's the next step for us? And that's going to be a really big, important question coming in the training camp: How are we going to be better? How are we going to literally look at the trophy, know that was last year and then forget about it? And so, it's going to be a very interesting training camp to see where our mind's at. But I'm excited for the challenge."

Brunson captained the Knicks to a thrilling NBA Finals victory over the Spurs, helping them end their 53-year title drought. As challenging as that was, he knows defending that crown will be even tougher, with the league now in an era of parity.

New punitive financial restrictions, like the second apron of the luxury tax, have led to eight different winners in the last eight years. Though the Western Conference is loaded with San Antonio and Oklahoma City at the top, the East has gotten tougher around the Knicks.

For the reigning champs, standing still could mean falling behind. They've already lost center Mitchell Robinson, but they can't afford to lose their edge as well. Between their truncated offseason and being toasted and feted and told how great they are, that can be a challenge in its own right.

"Absolutely," Brunson said. "You definitely lose a lot of time — obviously for the right reason; we got it done — to be able to go through the summer and realize, 'All right, there's a lot on your plate now.'

"How are you going to remain hungry? How are you going to remain focused? How are you going to push the envelope for you to be better the next time? So, those are all questions that I believe I have the answers for. I feel like I know what I'm doing to push myself. But only time will tell."

Brunson is a founding member of the JPMorganChase Athlete Council, which helps athletes handle their finances. The All-Star famously took less money in his extension with the Knicks to help them build out their roster.

It paid off. Once they got back to the Eastern Conference finals — where they'd lost the previous year to the Pacers — Brunson said he knew they had a real shot at breaking through. They put those hard-learned lessons to use, and their series of comeback victories against the Spurs in the NBA Finals closed the deal.

"I think once we got to the conference finals — obviously we lost there a season ago — just getting back there, back to where we were, we understand what we did last time and how can we change that," Brunson said.

"I think once we started to continue to win there, [I knew] we [would] actually have a chance. But it was I think the best part about it: We just kept chipping away the entire season and just kept chipping away, chipping away. You just never knew when things were going to break through. And having that mindset, then once they actually did, it was kind of a sigh of relief."

Now, Brunson said he'll enjoy some downtime with his family, recover from surgery on his left wrist and forearm and then turn his eyes toward a title defense — even if it is with Robinson playing for rival Boston.

"First and foremost, I love Mitch. I'm happy for Mitch. I will always love Mitch except those four times we play him," Brunson said. "But, that's my brother. I'm super excited for him. It's a great opportunity for him. And, yeah, I'm happy ... except for those four times."

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NBA set to probe odd deal

By COLLIN WARD

The NBA is taking a closer look at the contract the Bucks agreed to give Gary Trent Jr., according to ESPN's Shams Charania.

Trent agreed to a four-year, $64-million deal with Milwaukee on Saturday, raising eyebrows across the league.

Last season, the guard averaged his fewest minutes per game since his rookie season, putting up an inefficient 8.1 points and shooting just 38.7 percent from the floor. He even fell out of the Bucks rotation entirely at times.

Despite that, the Bucks rewarded the shooting guard with a gargantuan raise and guaranteed salary for four years.

While some called it an offseason blunder, others claim it is circumstantial evidence that the Bucks circumvented the salary cap to get the most out of the final years of Giannis Antetokounmpo.

Coming off a $51.8 million contract with the Raptors in 2024, Trent signed for a league-minimum $2.6 million with the Bucks.

This was the only contract the Bucks could afford as they paid heavy prices on Antetokounmpo and Damien Lillard and were deep into the luxury tax apron.

Trent's numbers dropped in Milwaukee, no longer starting as he did at times with the Raptors, but the Bucks re-signed him last offseason with the 20 percent non-Bird raise.

The extreme drop-off followed by a jump in salary that doesn't match on-court performance could potentially hint at a handshake deal made that promised a certain salary in the future for a short-term pay cut.

The probing comes after just about everyone in the NBA world questioned the signing.

NBA salary cap expert Nate Duncan said on X that the contract "would fall under the provision that there is no possible explanation other than circumvention."

ESPN's Tim MacMahon chimed in, saying the contract stunk.

"It smells awful," he said on "Brian Windhorst & The Hoop Collective."

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He's Pacing himself

LeBron mum on naming next team in chat with Haliburton

ANOTHER TIME: LeBron James, during a live recording of the "Mind the Game" podcast at Fanatics Fest host site Javits Center, kidded with Pacers point guard Tyrese Haliburton (inset) that Thursday would not be the day he announced where he would play next season after parting ways with the Lakers. Shutterstock (2)

By GRANT YOUNG

Countless members of the basketball community were hoping LeBron James would announce with which team he'd be signing with during his live taping of the "Mind the Game" podcast at Fanatics Fest on Thursday at Javits Center.

But James wasted no time asserting that his decision would not be revealed during the taping, which featured Tyrese Haliburton, the Pacers' All-Star point guard, as a guest star.

"Tyrese Haliburton attempted to ask LeBron James about his decision early on in the program and James did not bite, saying, 'Didn't we already talk about this in the back?' " ESPN's Dave McMenamin posted on X just a few minutes into the proceedings. "Haliburton acquiesced and said, 'I'll leave it alone.' "

It was clear James was not entertaining any chatter about where he's going to sign during the podcast, which appeared to be focused on other basketball-related topics with Haliburton.

James also appeared later at the event's invitation-only Game Plan Summit but also declined to break his news.

Either James hasn't decided yet or wanted to keep it to himself for at least another day.

James reportedly is deciding between leading contenders the 76ers, Cavaliers, Heat and Warriors.

Plane mess grounds Liberty, postpones game in Dallas

By MADELINE KENNEY

DALLAS — Ten hours of waiting, a plane change, and the Liberty ended up going nowhere.

As a result, Thursday's game against the Wings has been postponed until next week.

The WNBA announced Thursday morning that the game would move to 8 p.m. ET Monday after the Liberty experienced significant travel delays leaving New York due to weather and mechanical issues with the team's charter plane.

The Wings will honor all tickets purchased for the original game day.

Several members of the Liberty detailed their travel woes on social media late Wednesday, including rookie Pauline Astier.

"10 hours later, still on the tarmac," she wrote — translated from her native French — in an Instagram story along with a photo of her and developmental player Marine Fauthoux on the plane.

The Liberty initially were scheduled to leave around 2 p.m. Wednesday. They switched planes because of a mechanical issue at one point before de-boarding for good around midnight.

Dallas experienced significant weather issues Wednesday, resulting in widespread delays.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued a ground stop Wednesday afternoon at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport and Dallas Love Field, effectively pausing flights from departing and arriving as a storm hit North Texas.

Severe thunderstorms in the New York area also caused flight delays.

Wings coach Jose Fernandez said he became aware "just before midnight" that postponing the game was an option.

Whenever postponing a game is discussed, the home team leads the effort to ensure the arena can schedule the proper number of staff and secure enough security for the proposed new game day.

There's also the hurdle of figuring out the broadcast situation. Thursday's game was supposed to be aired by Prime Video. The Wings' press release said broadcast information would be announced when finalized.

Prime Video directed questions regarding the postponement to the league.

The Liberty are slated to leave for Indianapolis on Friday and play the Fever on Saturday before heading to Dallas for Monday's game.

The Liberty did not return The Post's request for comment.

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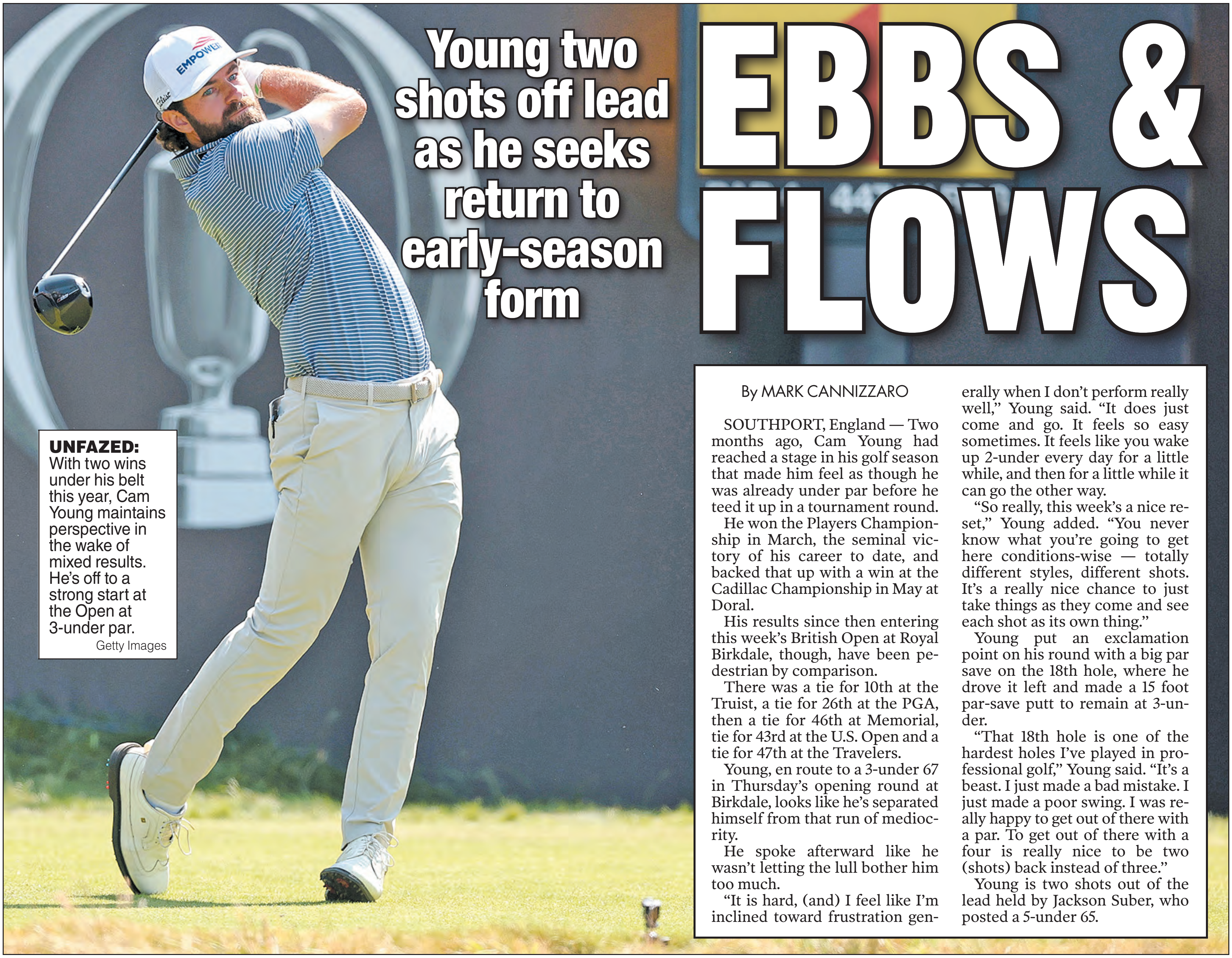
Young two shots off lead as he seeks return to early-season form



UNFAZED: With two wins under his belt this year, Cam Young maintains perspective in the wake of mixed results. He's off to a strong start at the Open at 3-under par.

Getty Images

By MARK CANNIZZARO

SOUTHPORT, England — Two months ago, Cam Young had reached a stage in his golf season that made him feel as though he was already under par before he teed it up in a tournament round.

He won the Players Championship in March, the seminal victory of his career to date, and backed that up with a win at the Cadillac Championship in May at Doral.

His results since then entering this week's British Open at Royal Birkdale, though, have been pedestrian by comparison.

There was a tie for 10th at the Truist, a tie for 26th at the PGA, then a tie for 46th at Memorial, tie for 43rd at the U.S. Open and a tie for 47th at the Travelers.

Young, en route to a 3-under 67 in Thursday's opening round at Birkdale, looks like he's separated himself from that run of mediocrity.

He spoke afterward like he wasn't letting the lull bother him too much.

"It is hard, (and) I feel like I'm inclined toward frustration generally when I don't perform really well," Young said. "It does just come and go. It feels so easy sometimes. It feels like you wake up 2-under every day for a little while, and then for a little while it can go the other way.

"So really, this week's a nice reset," Young added. "You never know what you're going to get here conditions-wise — totally different styles, different shots. It's a really nice chance to just take things as they come and see each shot as its own thing."

Young put an exclamation point on his round with a big par save on the 18th hole, where he drove it left and made a 15 foot par-save putt to remain at 3-under.

"That 18th hole is one of the hardest holes I've played in professional golf," Young said. "It's a beast. I just made a bad mistake. I just made a poor swing. I was really happy to get out of there with a par. To get out of there with a four is really nice to be two (shots) back instead of three."

Young is two shots out of the lead held by Jackson Suber, who posted a 5-under 65.

McIlroy positive despite 'stupid mistakes'

By MARK CANNIZZARO

SOUTHPORT, England — Rory McIlroy, one of the favorites at this week's British Open at Royal Birkdale, looked queasy at times in Thursday's roller-coaster opening round.

He finished the day 2-over par after shooting 72, but birdied 18 to get there. He ended the day seven shots behind leader Jackson Suber.

"I'll start with the positives," McIlroy said. "I drove the ball incredibly well. I took on the golf course off the tee. Obviously, with the positions that I put myself in off the tee, I feel like I obviously should have shot a better score."

He bogeyed both par-5s and his putting was a struggle.

"Just too many stupid mistakes," he said. "But every time I made a stupid mistake, thankfully I made a birdie to sort of keep myself in it. [I'm] not too far away. Go out there and shoot a good one and get myself right back in it for the weekend."

OPEN NOTES

➤ **James Nicholas**, the pride of Scarsdale, shot a 5-over 75 on Thursday in his first British Open round, and he went to bed hoping he would be able to play a second round Friday.

Nicholas has been hampered by bone bruises at the bottom of both his feet after having to jump over a fence to get to his car at a recent tournament in Spain. He revealed to The Post that he may be forced to withdraw if the pain doesn't subside.

Nicholas, who didn't even play a practice round Wednesday to rest his feet, is not scheduled to tee off until 11:41 a.m. local time Friday, which is later than his 6:35 a.m. time Thursday. But still, he said he was in considerable pain and was "hopeful" he would be able to play.

Nicholas said he was "disappointed" with his start to the tournament because he thought the course was receptive to scoring.

"I'm on a run of form at the moment, playing really good and not getting much out of it, so I'm a bit frustrated," he said. "I didn't really take advantage of the conditions, either. Conditions are great out there, really good for scoring."

He's eight shots off the lead and needs a low round Friday to make it to the weekend — if he's able to play at all.

➤ **Matt Baldwin**, who's a member at Birkdale and got into the field through qualifying, played in the first group off alongside Nicholas and hit the first shot of the tournament, an honor Nicholas had in last month's U.S. Open at Shinnecock.

"It was an incredible feeling," Baldwin said. "It was terrifying. It was overwhelming. But it's something that will stay with me for the rest of my life."

➤ One of the funny exchanges of the week came in an interview with Australia's **Travis Smyth**, who was reveling in a nine-hole practice round he played with Scheffler on Wednesday.

"Yesterday was sweet, playing with Scottie for the first time," Smyth said. "Watching the precision of his iron play was amazing. It was a great experience watching him play. He's a lovely guy, really down to earth, which I'm happy about. He's not like a d–khead or anything, so it was good."

SILENT BLIGHT

Mark Cannizzaro

SOUTHPORT, England — Two top players finished their respective British Open first rounds within minutes of each other Thursday at Royal Birkdale.

One, Jordan Spieth, had a disappointing start to the tournament, shooting a 3-over 73 to face an uphill battle to make the cut Friday.

The other, Bryson DeChambeau, finished his round one shot off the lead at the time, with a 3-under 67.

While a large group of reporters waited in the interview tent to speak to DeChambeau, who had been requested by R&A officials, Spieth poked his head in to courteously ask if anyone needed to speak to him.

Minutes later, an R&A official appeared to inform the masses with pads, pens and microphones that DeChambeau would not be coming to the interview tent because he declined.

This was hardly a first for DeChambeau, whose moods shift as rapidly as the coastal winds over the British links — going from everyone's best friend to petulant child.

DeChambeau declined to speak to reporters throughout the week of the PGA Championship in May and again last month at the Shinnecock U.S. Open.

At least in those two weeks, there was a tangible reason for DeChambeau to run and hide. He was playing poorly en route to missing the cut in the first three major championships of the year.

He shot 6-over at the Masters, 7-over at the PGA and 5-over at the U.S. Open and entered this week facing the ignominious possibility of taking the collar in the 2026 majors.

Not a great way to enhance your YouTube brand.

I've always liked DeChambeau, and always argued that he's misunderstood because he has an awkward personality and sometimes puts his foot in his mouth.

It wasn't long ago that DeChambeau was heavily disliked by many players and golf fans.

But that changed when he opened up to people like us at The Post to tell his story in a 2021 profile column from Tiger Woods' Hero tournament in the Bahamas, explaining why he is the way he is, why he believed he was misunderstood and what his goals are.

Whether it was an intentional image clean-up campaign or it was genuine and from the heart, DeChambeau did the job, dramatically turning people's opinions of him.

Winning, of course, helped.

He won the 2020 U.S. Open at Winged Foot, then the Arnold Palmer Invitational the next year and the 2024 U.S. Open, at which he outdueled Rory McIlroy.

DeChambeau is one of the highest-profile players on LIV Golf and has turned himself into a YouTube megastar.

But what DeChambeau does not seem to understand is that he cannot live on YouTube alone. He needs to win major golf tournaments to remain relevant in the golf space.

He, too, wants to be liked. And more behavior like he pulled Thursday, as well as the previous four major championships in which he refused to make himself available to the media, won't help that cause.

More of that will simply sabotage all the good DeChambeau did to repair his once-poor image in the first place.

In an effort to save some face with the R&A, not to mention knowing he would be subjected to only softball questions, Dechambeau acquiesced to speak only to its in-house video team after Thursday's round.

DeChambeau is one of the stars of the sport and there are pressing topics to be asked about by reporters — such as reasons for his poor form in the majors when he has had much success on LIV and how he feels about the state of LIV, which appears to be on

HANDS UP, HOPES DOWN: Bryson DeChambeau shows frustration at Thursday's Open round. He later declined to speak to reporters — something he's done more than once. AP

British Open

Royal Birkdale Golf Club
Southport, England

Leaderboard	
Jackson Suber	-5
Daniel Brown	-4
Sungjae Im	-4
Thomas Detry	-3
Robert MacIntyre	-3
Francesco Molinari	-3
Bryson DeChambeau	-3
Ryan Gerard	-3
MJ Daffue	-3
Pierceson Coody	-3
Cameron Young	-3
Notables	
Scottie Scheffler	-2
Collin Morikawa	-2
Tommy Fleetwood	-1
Jon Rahm	-1
Keegan Bradley	-1
Brooks Koepka	E
Rory McIlroy	+2

Getty Images

Rory McIlroy

On the air

Friday
NBCSN/Peacock: 1:30-4 a.m.
USA: 4 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Saturday
USA: 5 a.m.-7 a.m.
NBC: 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

Sunday
USA: 4-7 a.m.
NBC: 7 a.m.-2 p.m.

FORE-CAST

Friday
74 degrees; Partly cloudy
5 pct. chance of rain
Winds: N 12 mph

Saturday
70 degrees; Partly cloudy
13 pct. chance of rain
Winds: N 13 mph

Sunday
69 degrees: Mostly sunny
3 pct. chance of rain
Winds: NNW 12 mph

DeChambeau should be embarrassed for blowing off media

life support with the Saudi financial backers having pulled out.

What is DeChambeau going to do if he wins the Claret Jug come Sunday?

Continue to run and hide?

Refer everyone to his YouTube channel and hand out a one-day-only free password to it so we can read what he has to say?

Earlier in the week, Nick Faldo skewered DeChambeau in an interview with Sky Sports, saying he has "no idea of strategy" on links courses.

Golf Channel's Brandel Chamblee, a frequent critic of DeChambeau, then piled on, ripping his form and mocking his social media pursuits, saying he "went from chasing Scottie and Rory to chasing Grant Horvat" for YouTube hits.

If it was those isolated criticisms that have caused DeChambeau to punish the rest of the working press, that's not a very sound strategy.

All that will do is accelerate the self-destruction of the image that seemed so important for him to rebuild in the first place.

Before the tournament, a national reporter asked Dechambeau for a couple of minutes to ask a few questions and DeChambeau declined.

When the reporter asked him the reason for his refusal, DeChambeau launched into that tired and lazy anti-reporter narrative, lumping everyone in as "you guys."

Paraphrasing, DeChambeau told the reporter that every time he speaks to "you guys" he has to spend a million dollars to repair his image.

More of that thought process and petulant behavior and it's going to cost him a lot more than that to clean up his mess — especially if he continues to whiff in major championships.

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THE OPEN
DeCHAMBEAU

Suber duper start for Open newcomer

JACKSON'S HOLE: Jackson Suber plays a shot during Thursday's opening round of The Open Championship, where he took an early lead.

By MARK CANNIZZARO

SOUTHPORT, England — Surely you had Jackson Suber on your betting card as the first-round leader of the 154th British Open on Thursday at Royal Birkdale.

No?

Well, that's your outright leader entering Friday's second round after he posted a 5-under-par 65 on the browned-out, baked-out, scorched earth of Birkdale, where it hasn't rained in ages with no moisture in the forecast for the rest of this week.

Suber stands one shot ahead of Sungjai Im and England's Daniel Brown, who shot 4-under 66s, and a long list of players at 3-under, including Cam Young, Bryson DeChambeau, Ryan Gerard, Robert McIntyre and Francesco Molinari.

World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler, who has struggled with some opening rounds this year, is in good position at 2-under.

Meanwhile, some of the pre-tournament favorites struggled, including Rory McIlroy, who shot 2-over 72 and Matt Fitzpatrick (72).

Suber jump-started his round on the back nine after shooting an even-par 34 on the front. He birdied Nos. 10, 11, 14 and 16 and eagled the par-5 17th to close in 31.

"Things just really started going after the birdie on 10," Suber said. "I just felt like the momentum was really in my favor. Just kind of kept the ball in good spots and didn't put much pressure on my game to make pars."

Suber, 26 and in his second year on the PGA Tour, came to the tournament having never played a round of links golf in his life.

"This is my fifth day here," he said. "Monday was my first round of links golf, so I've played 27 holes before I played the first round today. I've never been to Europe."

Suber, who had played in just two major championships before this week (a 73rd-place finish in 2024 as an amateur and a missed cut last month at Shinnecock), said he watched a YouTube video of every hole at Birkdale last week to prepare.

He called his European experience so far "awesome," saying, "The golf is really cool and just the towns, how the train system works. We went into Liverpool the other day with my fiancée and Pierceson Coody and his wife, so that was really cool to see a European city and enjoy that."

Asked whether he's driving on the left side of the road, Suber said, "No."

Why not?

"Because I'm trying to make it here for four days," he said.

The way he played Thursday, it will take a very bad second round Friday to keep him off the tee sheet for the weekend.

Asked where this round came from, Suber said, "I've just been playing good the last few months and just knowing that good golf is going to take care of everything, and really trusting my caddie to figure out where we're going to hit it."

Indeed, Suber had a tie for fourth at the Byron Nelson, another tie for fourth at the Canadian Open and he finished tied for sixth at the John Deere two weeks ago.

His plan for the rest of the week?

"Just keep being patient and keep being disciplined and knowing that you can get in spots where bogey is a great score and taking that and just moving on," Suber said. "I've been hitting the driver well, and I feel like I'm a good iron player. Just a lot of long irons into these holes. I think that suits my eye."

While you may not have been paying attention, Suber said he's felt form like this coming on this year, saying, "I feel like I've been really coming into myself as a golfer and maturing and learning what works for me."

Whatever he was doing Thursday worked just fine.

Rinse and repeat on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and he will become one of the unlikeliest players ever to lift the Claret Jug in triumph by Sunday evening.

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Lionel Scaloni

Shutterstock

World Cup final marked by teams' mutual respect

By MICHAEL DUARTE

The road to the 2026 FIFA World Cup final twisted through two very different semifinals.

Spain clinically dismantled tournament favorite France with a commanding 2-0 victory. A day later, Argentina was on the brink of elimination against England before Lionel Messi once again orchestrated some stoppage-time magic in a dramatic 2-1 comeback that sent the defending champions back to the sport's biggest stage.

Now Sunday's final in New Jersey feels refreshingly different.

There is no century-old feud or political baggage. No European neighbors separated by a fierce modern rivalry. Instead, Spain and Argentina share something increasingly rare in international football: mutual admiration.

They also share a language, a footballing philosophy rooted in technical excellence and generations of players whose careers have intertwined across the same clubs, cities and stadiums.

Sunday's final is less a collision of fierce enemies than it is a reunion of family friends competing for the Jules Rimet Trophy.

Head-to-head, they have met 14 times, with six victories apiece and two draws. Over the past six decades, they are perfectly even at 3-3. Their only previous World Cup meeting came July 13, 1966, in Birmingham, England, of all places, where Argentina claimed a 2-1 group stage victory over Spain that helped send them through to the knockout rounds.

Their most recent meeting came in March 2018, when Spain overwhelmed Argentina 6-1 without an injured Messi. Current head coach Lionel Scaloni was then an Argentine assistant under Jorge Sampaoli. Spain was coached by Julen Lopetegui, whose dramatic departure before that World Cup became one of the tournament's defining stories.

Eight years later, Scaloni returns to face not just the country he resides in but the man he considers his mentor in Luis de la Fuente.

"Spain is a great team," Scaloni said. "They deserved to win the semifinal. They beat a great team in France. France is very difficult to beat and they beat them squarely. They're fantastic. Everyone knows their style and how they play. We're going to prepare to face them and make a good show of it. We hope people enjoy the game."

De La Fuente is looking forward to facing his old friend and protégé.

"European football is not the same as South American football," he said. "I am very excited to face Argentina because I am a very close friend of Lionel Scaloni. Argentina was one of the big favorites before the World Cup. It will be a head-to-head match between two great teams."

No player embodies the connection between the countries more than Messi.

The game's greatest player crossed the Atlantic as a 13-year-old to join Barcelona's famed academy, spending 21 years with the Blaugrana while becoming one of the country's most beloved figures. Spain even attempted to persuade him to represent La Roja internationally before Messi chose Argentina.

Diego Simeone followed a similar path, starring for Sevilla and Atletico Madrid before becoming Atletico's iconic manager. Today, his son, Guilano, wears Argentina's colors while playing professionally in Spain.

Many Argentine internationals have built their reputations in La Liga. Spanish players grew up idolizing Messi. Sunday will also produce the first international meeting between Messi and Spain's teenage phenom Lamine Yamal, the 19-year-old prodigy who is viewed by many as Messi's successor at Barcelona.

"It's going to be a very special game," Messi said. "They are a fantastic side. Wonderful players. They play very, very well. I know them quite well. I know all the players as well. I've faced them in Barca. Some of them are still there. It's going to be a very special final."

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Balogun red card ultimately may be green light for US soccer

By ETHAN SEARS

FAYETTEVILLE, Ga. — After Folarin Balogun admitted in a televised interview this week that his teammates had "a bit of nerves" after his red card suspension was suspended, causing the biggest controversy of the 2026 World Cup, U.S. Soccer CEO J.T. Batson avoided saying whether the White House's involvement in the situation was a mistake.

"The president is able to do what the president wants to do," Batson told a small group of reporters Thursday, including The Post. "The president is the president of the United States. Obviously, we're incredibly grateful for all the support from all of our fans across the country, wherever they are, and we're excited about that. And we know that'll pay dividends going forward."

The Post's Mark Cannizzaro reported exclusively that Batson, along with federation COO Dan Helfrich — who was part of Thursday's roundtable — helped lead U.S. Soccer in fighting the Balogun ruling based on the incorrect application of VAR, threatening legal action.

President Donald Trump's involvement, which included a call to FIFA president Gianni Infantino, caused a perception that a political favor had been done for the U.S. True or not, that created global outrage over the situation, and became a rallying cry that motivated Belgium.

It also seemed to affect the USMNT, which played a nervous game in front of a record-setting audience that watched on TV.

"My initial reaction was I was happy to be back in the team, but when I kind of started to reflect, I knew it was going to cause a lot of controversy," Balogun told CBS This Morning in his first interview since the World Cup. "And I could almost see within my teammates a bit of nerves because it's something that is so unique.

"But the closer we got to the game, I just tried to focus as best as I could, but it was difficult. A lot of outside noise, and that's hard to avoid."

Batson said the immense attention the situation created was ultimately a positive for the growth of the sport.

"I think the outpouring of support was incredible," he said. "And at many points along the way, my phone blew up when people felt like we got a bad foul called on us or they felt like there was an opportunity for something to improve. I think that's a sign of us growing as a soccer culture. People care.

"The fact that things cut through, the fact that people talked about it, it was on sports talk radio in ways that soccer never would have been before. To me, that's a sign of the growth of our sport. It's a sign of the success of this tournament."

Luis de la Fuente

Getty Images

Rival coaches' bond goes back decades

By MICHAEL DUARTE

NEW YORK — The World Cup Final between Argentina and Spain has no shortage of storylines. Lionel Messi looking to go out on top. Argentina seeking to go back-to-back for the first time since Brazil in 1962. Spain trying to record a record seventh clean sheet while reclaiming the title for the first time since 2010.

Yet perhaps the most fascinating duel Sunday will be the story of a master and his apprentice spending 90 minutes trying to outwit one another.

Spain manager Luis de la Fuente and Argentina boss Lionel Scaloni share a bond that stretches back nearly a decade, long before either man was lifting major international trophies. In 2017, after Scaloni retired as a player, he enrolled in Spain's coaching program at Las Rozas. One of the instructors helping shape the next generation of managers was de la Fuente.

The lessons taught inside those classrooms eventually helped shape one of international soccer's brightest coaching minds. Now, they collide with the World Cup hanging in the balance.

Not since Obi-Wan Kenobi vs. Anakin Skywalker in "Star Wars" have we seen a battle between mentor and protégé this big.

After Spain shocked France 2-0 in the semifinal in Dallas, de la Fuente admitted that he hoped Argentina would join them in the Final.

"I am very excited to face Argentina because I'm a very close friend of Lionel Scaloni," de la Fuente said. "It will be a head-to-head match between two great teams."

After Argentina completed its comeback over England in their semifinal, Scaloni gushed about the influence his friend had on his career.

"He's my mentor," Scaloni said. "He taught me everything I know. Now we face each other in a final."

The Argentine manager smiled while delivering the compliment, but quickly reminded everyone where friendship ends.

"On Sunday, I'm very, very sorry," he said. "I'm going to try to beat him."

The mutual respect runs far deeper than coaching licenses. Scaloni lives in Mallorca with his Spanish wife, Elisa Montero, and their children. He spent years playing in La Liga and has openly rooted for Spain whenever Argentina was not involved. De la Fuente, meanwhile, has repeatedly praised Scaloni's leadership, calling him an example of how to build a team whose players willingly sacrifice for one another.

The mutual admiration and respect will be placed on hold for one unforgettable afternoon in New Jersey on Sunday.

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KIDS STUFF

US looks at eliminating pay-to-play to expand youth soccer talent pool

By ETHAN SEARS

FAYETTEVILLE, Ga. — U.S. Soccer's answer to the problems of the pay-to-play system is not to reform it, but to tear it down entirely.

"We are not seeking to make the current system more affordable," federation COO Dan Helfrich said Thursday. "We're trying to create a new system that then we make highly affordable. It's a really important distinction."

Functionally, such a thing would be a massive undertaking and would meet significant opposition from stakeholders who benefit financially from the current system (and who would certainly note that U.S. Soccer would stand to benefit financially from a new system).

Pay-to-play, which refers to massive club fees and travel costs associated with youth soccer in the United States — features that don't exist in most other countries, where the sport is subsidized, largely by the government — has come into the spotlight since the U.S. men's national team was eliminated in the World Cup as one of the main reasons why the country's talent development is not at the level it should be.

The system exists, in varying forms, with all youth sports, but with soccer it seems to exacerbate issues that are already there because the talent pipeline is generally not as robust as, for example, basketball.

"From outside, I felt that people from a poor background had no access to the game," said Arsène Wenger, the former Arsenal manager who now works as FIFA's chief of global football development. "That is quite a bit part of the population that usually in Europe, the best football players come from poor backgrounds. We want maybe a job to do as well to make it possible and available for everybody and after to be consistent because it's not a short-term fix."

TALKIN' 'BOUT MY GENERATION: The Team USA U-17 team looks on during a penalty kick against Morocco at a FIFA Under-17 World Cup match in November 2025. Getty Images

Helfrich and Wenger, as well as USSF CEO J.T. Batson, spoke Thursday to a small group of reporters that included The Post at U.S. Soccer's headquarters outside of Atlanta. The conversation focused largely on how the federation can continue growing the sport after what Batson called an "incredibly successful" World Cup that "has fundamentally changed the trajectory of the sport in the United States."

Investment, Batson said, has to come from a combination of government funding, sponsorships and private philanthropy. The federation's goal is not just to expand access to the sport but to have alignment at all levels of the sport and to educate more coaches.

"We know, by analyzing the whole world, it's only down to education," Wenger said. "And in the States, there's no tradition of sports that use their feet. All the sports, you don't need the skill with your feet. ... Unfortunately, to develop skill with your feet, you need to start very early. You cannot start at 14 years of age and become an international player."

Consistently identifying talent at a young age requires developing infrastructure that the U.S. simply does not have yet.

Wenger used the example of his home country of France, which opened its first academy in 1973 and won its first European title in 1984. For all the expectations attached to the generation of players that competed at this summer's World Cup, the generation of Americans that can truly compete for the trophy has yet to come through the system.

"We feel like we're one month into the next five-year period of this summer, LA '28 and the women's World Cup in 2031 to ensure that the U.S. is one of the world's great soccer countries," Batson said.

Though the growth of U.S. Soccer over the past two decades is undeniable — as is the new interest in the sport driven by the World Cup — that all represents a massive undertaking rife with potential obstacles.

"Ultimately, it requires resources, and essentially, someone is paying," Batson said. "So governments need to step up. Professional clubs will continue to need to scale their investment. Of course, our corporate partners and media partners will step up in ways that allow us to continue to do this.

"And then, of course, we, as U.S. Soccer and working with FIFA, need to set the right standards so that the money is being spent most effectively. There's a comprehensive body of work that's well underway around how you address that. But ultimately, free is paid by someone, and we need to make sure that we're aligning those someones together in a way that has the biggest impact."

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Pochettino being courted to return despite brutal KO

By ETHAN SEARS

FAYETTEVILLE, Ga. — U.S. Soccer is in "active discussions" with Mauricio Pochettino and his staff about returning to coach the men's national team, federation CEO J.T. Batson said Thursday.

Pochettino's contract officially expired after the USMNT was eliminated from the World Cup with a 4-1 defeat by Belgium in the Round of 16, but it's clear the federation would like to keep the Argentine manager around so long as he's amenable.

In a Thursday roundtable with a small group of reporters, including The Post, Batson shared that Pochettino was part of discussions around the hiring of Steve Cherundolo to coach the federation's under-23 team, which will compete at the 2028 Olympics. Though he declined to give a specific timeline for a decision, or say whether the federation has spoken with other candidates, that is a sign of Pochettino's interest in staying.

"As we shared, we are going to take a break after the World Cup and rest and recuperate," Batson said. "I didn't get to do too much resting and recuperating, but we're excited about the discussions. [Pochettino and his staff have] been active about long-term planning. ... We're feeling good about where we are overall, and we're looking forward to the discussions."

While many expected Pochettino to go back to the club level following the World Cup — indeed, Pochettino has been open about his desire to return to the English Premier League — most high-end jobs at the club level have been filled.

The federation, as reported by The Athletic, offered Pochettino an extension through the 2030 cycle before this World Cup started, making clear its interest.

As for the question of whether the USMNT's World Cup performance — topping the group and winning a knockout game, all in convincing fashion, before an epic no-show in the Round of 16 — was good enough to warrant keeping the manager, U.S. Soccer's answer appears to be that it was.

"There are lots of things that need to be true for us to continue to win World Cups on the women's side and for us to truly compete for them on the men's side," Batson said when asked why such a loss was considered acceptable. "Our focus is on putting ourselves in the best position to be able to do that. Obviously, our senior team performances matter, as do the state of our youth national teams, as do the state of our pathways more broadly, as do our talent identification and development, as does the state of our coaching."

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at Phillies

FRIDAY: OFF
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SUNDAY: 1:35 p.m.
SNY, WHSQ (880 AM)

SMOKE EATERS

MOVING ON UP! Mets catcher Francisco Alvarez follows through on a home run during the seventh inning — after swatting one in the third — against the Phillies on Thursday. The game's original start time was moved up by one hour that afternoon because of air quality concerns, with some fans in Philadelphia sporting masks.

Imagn Images; AP

Mets bust out of break with win in Philly amid air quality concerns

By DAN MARTIN

PHILADELPHIA — Maybe it's a sign of the apocalypse.

No, not the smoke-filled swath covering much of the East Coast on Thursday; that was expected.

Instead, it was the Mets opening the second half of their season with a 4-1 win over the Phillies.

Powered by solo homers from Francisco Alvarez — who had two — and Brett Baty, as well as a strong start by Christian Scott, the reeling Mets avoided falling 18 games under .500 for the first time this year.

After the start of the game was moved up an hour due to air quality concerns caused by Canadian wildfires — which forced both teams to shorten their pregame routines after their truncated All-Star break — the Mets played an unusually solid game.

"I'm not gonna lie: Towards the end, it got a little thick," Scott said of playing through the smoke. "It felt like breathing in some metal. ... A little spoonful of adversity never hurt anybody."

The Mets have downed plenty of adversity this season, and there's little chance of a turnaround, especially as they're expected to sell at the Aug. 3 trade deadline.

They also have the toughest schedule the rest of the season and start the second half visiting second-place division rival Philadelphia and NL Central leader Milwaukee before hosting the NL West-leading Dodgers and NL East-topping Braves.

METS 4
PHILLIES 1

Boxscore Page 41

But they can try to avoid being blown away by what's ahead of them over the final two-plus months of the season.

"We're well aware we're staring down one of the hardest schedules in baseball for the second half," interim manager Andy Green said. "We should relish that, like that and rise up and meet that. I don't think there's another attitude to take."

It's performances like what they got from Alvarez and Baty at the bottom of the lineup and a promising young starting pitcher like Scott that could boost them.

On Thursday, as the Philadelphia skyline slowly disappeared in the distance due to the worsening conditions, the Mets took the lead in the top of the third on Alvarez's first homer of the night, a one-out shot to dead center.

Baty added his fifth of the year, leading off against Aaron Nola in the seventh.

Alvarez followed in the next at-bat with his second of the game to end Nola's night.

On the other side, Scott retired 10 of the first 11 batters he faced before Bryce Harper doubled down the right field line with one out in the bottom of the fourth.

Brooks Raley replaced Scott after just 79 pitches to face Harper.

Harper reached on a four-pitch walk, but Raley got Marsh swinging to end the threat.

The Phillies got to Luke Weaver with two outs in the eighth as Trea Turner took him deep to make it 3-1. It snapped Weaver's 27-inning streak without allowing a home run.

The Mets got the run back when A.J. Ewing doubled in Jared Young in the ninth to finish off a strange afternoon and evening.

"I didn't think it was bad till the last couple innings," Baty said. "My eyes were burning and itching a little bit. [Carson] Benge said it felt like you were sitting by a campfire. ... It was fun ... but it didn't feel great playing ball with it."

The results, though, were pretty good for a change.

dan.martin@nypost.com

Mets notes / Page 47

Semien returns from IL, still sits

By DAN MARTIN

PHILADELPHIA — Marcus Semien returned from his rehab assignment and was reinstated from the 10-day injured list in time for Thursday's 4-1 win over the Phillies to open the second half of the season, but he wasn't in the lineup.

It's an indication of just how poor the veteran second baseman has been in his first season with the Mets, as interim manager Andy Green went with the lefty-swinging Brett Baty against Philadelphia right-hander Aaron Nola.

And Baty delivered with a pair of hits, including a homer.

"When my name is called, I'll be ready," Semien said before the game. "I'm ready to play every single day. That's what I told Andy."

Asked if Semien and Baty, who was hitting better before the All-Star break- were in something of a lefty-righty platoon, Green said the team wanted to get Semien a full workout day before he started a game, since he was unable to play in any minor league rehab games during the break.

Green added that Semien was expected to be in the lineup Saturday when the Phillies are scheduled to start lefty Jesús Luzardo.

"He'll figure prominently in our mix going forward," Green said of Semien.

Semien, a significant part of the offseason overhaul undertaken by president of baseball operations David Stearns, had been sidelined since June 24 with a left hip flexor strain.

Even before the injury, though, the 35-year-old was having the worst season of his 14-year career.

Not only has his offense dropped off for a third straight year, Semien has been a below-average defender at second base.

Baty can play second and third and Green said he might use him at first.

"This is who he is as a hitter and what he can do," Green said of Baty's recent hot streak. "He presents a lot of defensive versatility ... [and] he's showing the pop in his bat we believe he has."

Jon Heyman

INSIDE MLB

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Seller's delight

Mets to deal as one of few non-contending teams

THE Mets' deadline sale is on now, according to league sources, and they just may be in luck.

And I'm really not kidding about the rare good fortune either.

As a seller — and executives with other teams say the Mets are indeed making calls as a seller now — they might be able to negotiate some decent overpays in the what's expected to an extreme sellers' market.

It won't be completely easy since teams value players similarly now, but compared to the half dozen or so known sellers out there, they have more to dangle than most sellers. And that's true even if they don't have one well-priced, totally healthy veteran having a good year nearing the end of his contract to offer.

Rival execs say the Mets are willing to at least consider basically anyone but superstar Juan Soto plus talented kids Carson Benge, A.J. Ewing, Nolan McLean and Christian Scott.

There's still belief around the game in star shortstop Francisco Lindor — whose 2026 campaign has been rough and injury-plagued, but at 32, with $174M to go through 2031, plus his full no-trade power, word remains that an in-season deal involving him is very unlikely. Someone close to Lindor said "it's not happening," although Lindor declined comment to The Post about his potential veto.

Teams also like Bo Bichette, who's heated up off his own dreadful start, but his $126 million, three-year contract with two opt-out clauses that pays him $5M to opt out could significantly complicate things.

With Lindor and Bichette not especially likely to go anywhere, Freddy Peralta, Clay Holmes (who will go on a rehab assignment this week and has a chance to pitch in an MLB game before the Aug. 3 trade deadline) and a quartet of relievers led by Luke Weaver probably highlight a Mets sale. There are strong believers in Peralta as a playoff starter for many teams despite his off year and a negative trend line that's seen his start ERA rise to 4.66. (They say underlying numbers remain solid and chalk up his ERA to terrible Mets defense compared to Milwaukee.)

Overall, it probably won't be a bonanza but it should go much better than their last deadline sale in 2023, when they acquired Ryan Clifford, Luisangel Acuña and Drew Gilbert. Back then they sold high-priced Hall of Famers Justin Verlander and Max Scherzer when they had a somewhat greater chance (but still poor) to make the playoffs. It's down to 0.8 percent, via Fangraphs, now, so waiting and hoping would be malpractice.

One big positive this time: The Mets' main bait (Peralta, Holmes, relievers) have much more reasonable paydays than the then-record $43.3M Verlander and Scherzer salaries.

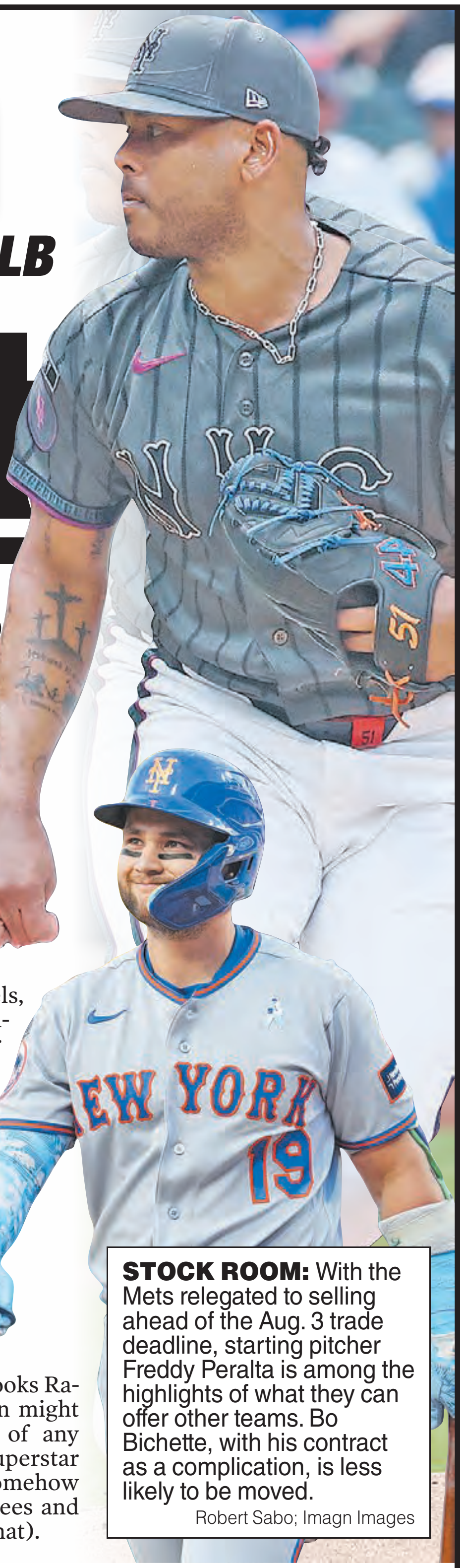
MLB execs also cite the likelihood of an especially "shallow" market for pitchers and hitters alike. And that's being kind.

It was shallow to start, and it's actually getting worse. Tarik Skubal, the potential marquee man of this deadline, is no longer a certainty to go with the Tigers getting healthier and moving close to the race. Logan Webb was told the Giants intend to keep him. And Sonny Gray and Aroldis Chapman look likely to stay in Boston now that the Red Sox are contending.

With 23 teams within four games of playoff territory, there may also be twice as many buyers as sellers. There are only six all-but-certain or certain sellers so far (Royals, A's, Angels, Mets, Giants and Rockies), and even if a few more fall into that category (Orioles? Jays? Nats? Tigers? Reds? Padres?), there will be a dearth of talent out there.

Plus, most selling teams won't have many impact arms or bats to dangle. They are long on youth (A's, Angels, Rockies), underperformance (Giants) and poor health (Royals).

If Skubal stays put, and Webb does, too, Peralta and Holmes start looking very good. And even assuming Devin Williams with $40M to go is untradeable barring an enormous pay down, the Mets' available relief corps fronted by Weaver, A.J. Minter, Brooks Raley and Huascar Brazobán might be the most interesting of any seller unless Padres superstar closer Mason Miller somehow hits the market (the Yankees and many others would love that).



STOCK ROOM: With the Mets relegated to selling ahead of the Aug. 3 trade deadline, starting pitcher Freddy Peralta is among the highlights of what they can offer other teams. Bo Bichette, with his contract as a complication, is less likely to be moved.

Robert Sabo; Imagn Images

Long-ball boost at HR Derby? Philly star says so

BRYCE Harper says he knows one reason balls were flying again at the Home Run Derby: The baseballs are juiced. He declined to say how he knows this but sounded certain off a derby that saw him launch a ball 482 feet.

"I'm not going to answer that. But they're juiced," Harper told The Post. "Everybody knows it. They do it every year."

The Derby is an exhibition, so it wouldn't be crazy or unfair to juice them, and even Harper himself (and **Mike Trout**) have advocated for metal bats to be used in the Derby. But MLB spokesman Glen Caplin says derby baseballs are no different than regular-season balls. According to Caplin, they use "the same ball, conditioned and stored like all the other balls."

In any case, the Home Run Derby has indeed produced longer homers in recent years, though theoretically grooved pitches, bigger swings and adrenaline from the national event could account for some difference.

Harper's 482-foot shot plus dingers that went 491 feet by **Junior Caminero**, 490 by **Willson Contreras** and 487 by both Caminero and Contreras are longer than any homers hit this season, with Braves star **Drake Baldwin's** 473-foot shot being the longest in-season.

Last year, **Oneil Cruz** hit one 513 feet at the Home Run Derby in Atlanta, easily topping the longest in the regular season, which was 493 feet by **Nick Kurtz**, followed by a pair at 485 and 484 feet by Trout.

The average home run in this year's derby traveled 430 feet, down from 433 last year (when Cruz also hit homers of 498 and 492 feet). The average regular-season home run this year is 396 feet, about the same as 397 last year.

No matter, MLB people say all 30 teams have stored baseballs in humidors since 2021 so that the baseballs are standardized everywhere. The one team that's different is Colorado, where the humidor is set differently to counteract the high altitude and thin air there.

Others who participated didn't suggest they'd heard balls were juiced. But **Kyle Schwarber**, the runner-up in this year's derby, didn't seem surprised by Harper's assertion, saying, "It's the Home Run Derby. They'd like to have some far ones."

Jordan Walker, who won the derby in thrilling fashion by hitting six straight homers to beat Schwarber by one, suggested he wasn't sure. "Maybe," he said. "But it's really not my call to make. I'm just going to go swing it, man."

TEST FOR SUCCESS

Dodgers series is chance for Yanks to show they're true title contenders

Mike Vaccaro

GET READY for this, because we're going to do this a lot in the weeks and months — even years — to come. We're going to use the Knicks as a template, as a blueprint, as a reference point whenever a team deems itself worthy of championship conversation. The Knicks are the model now. The Knicks are the exemplar.

The Yankees? They are worthy of such conversation, and it so happens that right now, they are a perfect case study for this. Like the '26 Knicks, they are comprised of enough components to be thought of as title worthy — at least in the abstract. Like the '26 Knicks, there's a lot to like about what they've done so far this year, capped by back-to-back-to-back 5-o'clock-lightning strikes in Washington just before the break.

And like the Knicks, they can be more frustrating than that Wordle game Wednesday that had a nation flummoxed *(or should we say pflummoxed? IYKYN)*.

And it so happens the Yankees now face, at a proximate juncture of their schedule, the same kind of immediate test the Knicks faced back on March 1. That was the day when those who chose to believe in the Knicks could take heart that perhaps their faith was at least a little bit justified, a sign that something real existed beyond all the question marks.

The Yankees host the Dodgers for three games starting Friday night, and this would be a fascinating series regardless of any specific factors. Yankees/Dodgers, New York/Los Angeles, is always going to pop, even if both teams are middling.

But both teams aren't middling. The Dodgers are the sport's gold standard, the two-time defending champion and, at 61-36, are a game and a half clear of every other team in the sport. The Yankees are 54-42, and while that's only good enough for second place in the AL East, it's also second best in the entire American League and they've done it for weeks without Aaron Judge and Max Fried *(picture the Dodgers if they had to make due for a while without Shohei Ohtani and ... well, Shohei Ohtani)*.

We aren't quite at the Dog Days yet, but we're getting there. July into August is when the grind really begins in MLB, not unlike March 1 in the NBA. On March 1, there's still a quarter of a season left to be played, and the playoffs seem like some distant oasis hidden in a valley somewhere, and the grind can be stultifying — broken up by the occasional Big Game.

March 1 was a Big Game at Madison Square Garden, a Sunday, and the Spurs were in town, at the very peak of their announcement that they weren't just a cute collection of kids but legit contenders. They'd just gone 11-0 in February, including torchings of the Pistons, Thunder and Lakers (by 28, in LA). They were eager to show all of that off to a national audience for a 1 o'clock start at the Garden.

The Knicks? They weren't at their nadir — that had been a 2-9 stretch in January, launched by a New Year's Eve loss at San Antonio. They certainly weren't at their apex to that point — that was when they'd won seven in a row in December capped by their win over the Spurs in the NBA Cup Finals.

They were ... good enough, but not good enough, in that strange short-hand that spurs Knicks fans to nod knowingly now, same way Yankees fans would if you describe the Bombers that way now. They were ... meh. They were biding time for something else. The Spurs offered a wonderful midterm exam for them, a chance to measure what their ceiling might be.

Same as the Dodgers provide the Yankees this weekend.

And on March 1 ... well, let's put it this way: The Knicks didn't solve all that ailed them that day, when they obliterated the Spurs 114-89 before a raucous Garden (that sounded, in retrospect, like it was doing a dry run for Game 4 101 days later). They still had a steady stream of stinkers ahead of them over the season's final 22 games. Most of the heavy lifting was still to come.

But for 48 minutes, they proved they not only belonged on the same floor as a member of the NBA's elite, they absolutely could beat them. Throttle them, even.

The Yankees aren't going to suddenly shatter the cautionary narratives that pester them if they take two out of three from the Dodgers. There'll still be 63 games to go come Monday. The playoffs will still seem like some distant oasis hidden in a valley somewhere, and the grind will absolutely be stultifying.

Still?

It sure would be a wonderful tonic to see Cam Schlittler throw seven strong against LA this weekend. Wouldn't hurt to see Ben Rice and Cody Bellinger bring their rejuvenated bats from the All-Star Game (and the games just before then) to The Bronx this weekend.

(And, while we're being greedy: Wouldn't hurt for Aaron Judge to reveal Friday that he got some excellent news over the break from his doctors.)

And it sure wouldn't hurt to acquire a little beat-the-Dodgers muscle memory this weekend, since you never know when you might need that again. One final lesson from March 1.

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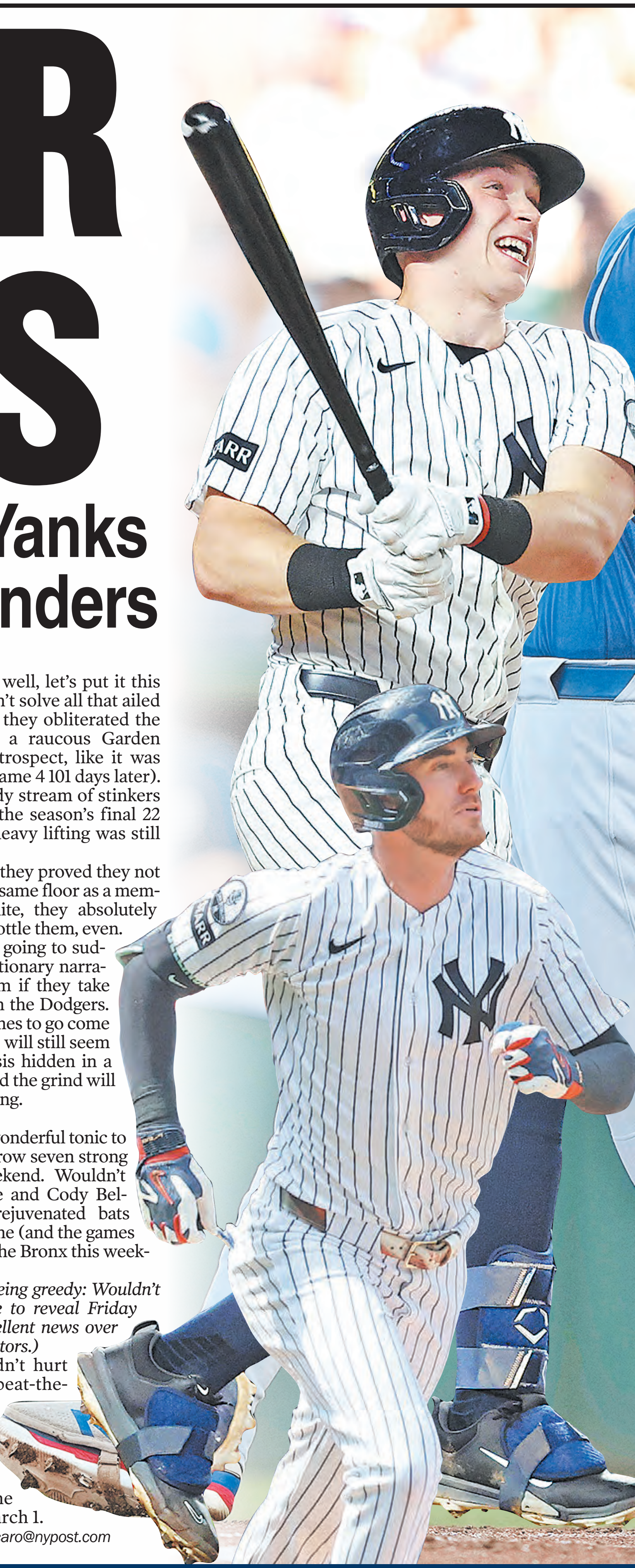

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SHO TIME: Ben Rice, Cody Bellinger and the Yankees face a big test against Shohei Ohtani and the Yankees this weekend at the Stadium.

Charles Wenzleberg / NY Post; Robert Sabo; Getty Images

Yanks hoping for sharper reimage

By GREG JOYCE

As most of his teammates enjoyed a break to gear up for the second half, Aaron Judge was trying to find out how much of it he will be able to play in.

The most significant item on the Yankees' docket this week was not Cody Bellinger winning All-Star Game MVP, Ben Rice showing off his swing in the Home Run Derby or even a 2024 World Series rematch against the Dodgers that begins on Friday in The Bronx.

AARON JUDGE

It was Judge going through a round of imaging on his right rib — nearly six weeks after doctors discovered a stress fracture — to help determine if and when he will return to the Yankees in the second half. The organization was not expecting to find a fully healed rib, but it was holding its breath nonetheless as it hoped to at least see enough improvement to allow the back-to-back AL MVP to begin mixing in some upper-body exercises after being shut down from them during his time on the injured list.

"Hopefully we get some positive news there and we can start moving forward," manager Aaron Boone said on the final day of the first half. "But I try not to think too much about it until we hear. It's going to be what it is."

The results, though, could have a major impact in determining the Yankees' fate this season. If enough healing has occurred, perhaps Judge could be back at some point in late August. If not, well, then the clock starts ticking a bit louder on the Yankees' hope and expectation to get Judge back on the field this season.

But either way, the Yankees are not going to rush Judge back too soon.

"We don't want to, because the schedule is what it is, put him in the position where we're putting him in jeopardy, where somehow it gets worse," general manager Brian Cashman said last week. "Because the downside of that would be a real problem, in my opinion, from what I understand."

The Yankees also know that even in a best-case scenario, it is likely still going to be at least another month before they get Judge back, meaning they will have to do better than their 18-19 record since he last played. They began 12-8 without him, then entered a 2-11 tailspin in which they were terrible at just about every facet of the game, before recovering to win four straight games heading into the break.

They should get some help in the coming weeks with the potential return of Max Fried (who could begin a rehab assignment Friday night) and Carlos Rodón (there was hope he might throw a bullpen session during the break) to strengthen the rotation. Their bullpen and perhaps the lineup (especially at catcher) could get reinforcements by the Aug. 3 trade deadline. And maybe they get Giancarlo Stanton back at some point in the second half, though they still don't seem to have much of an idea about when that could happen after a second calf strain delayed his return.

That said, had you told the Yankees before the season that in the first half they would miss Judge for 37 games, Stanton for 70 games, Fried for 52 games, Rodón for 52 games and Gerrit Cole for 51 games before the All-Star break, and they would still be 54-42 — three games back of the Rays for first place in the AL East — they likely would have signed up for that.

But the goal is not just to survive extended injury absences from most of their stars and highest-paid players. The goal is to win in October.

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What the next two months look like for Bombers

The Post's Greg Joyce takes a look at three questions facing the Yankees in the second half of the season.

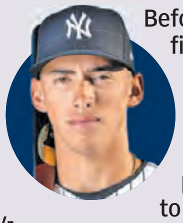
WHEN DOES AARON JUDGE RETURN?

Since the day they revealed that Aaron Judge was diagnosed with a stress fracture in his first right rib, the Yankees have said that the back-to-back AL MVP is expected to return at some point this season. But will he, and when, and in what condition? No one can say for sure just yet, though reimaging this week should give them at least a slightly clearer picture of how much longer they will have to survive without him.

WHO ARE THE NEW GUYS?

The Yankees will get some help at the Aug. 3 trade deadline, but the question is, how much? As they begin the second half, their biggest needs are a righty-hitting catcher and at least one high-leverage bullpen arm, if not two. **Austin Wells** was one of the worst hitters in the big leagues in the first half while the bullpen, despite owning the majors' lowest ERA, could use another trustworthy reliever.

DOES GEORGE LOMBARD JR. DEBUT?



Before spraining multiple fingers last month, the top shortstop prospect was picking up steam offensively at Triple-A and potentially starting to push his way into the conversation about whether he could impact the Yankees this season. Now that he is on the way back from the injured list, can he knock the door down in the second half if **José Caballero** and **Anthony Volpe** don't pick it up?

Second-half schedule

July 17-19	vs. Dodgers	Aug. 11-13	vs. Mariners	Sept. 4-6	at Padres
July 20-22	vs. Pirates	Aug. 14-16	at Blue Jays	Sept. 8-10	vs. Rockies
July 24-26	at Phillies	Aug. 18-20	at Orioles	Sept. 11-13	vs. Mets
July 27-30	at White Sox	Aug. 21-23	vs. Blue Jays	Sept. 14-16	at Twins
July 31-Aug 2	at Cubs	Aug. 25-27	vs. Astros	Sept. 18-20	at D'backs
Aug. 3-5	vs. Cardinals	Aug. 28-30	vs. Red Sox	Sept. 22-24	vs. Rays
Aug. 7-9	vs. Braves	Aug. 31-Sept. 2	at Angels	Sept. 25-27	vs. Orioles

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INJURY REPORT

- **Aaron Judge** (right rib stress fracture) was set to undergo reimaging this week to determine if he can begin doing upper-body activities.
- **Max Fried** (left elbow bone bruise) could start a rehab assignment as early as Friday after building up to 44 pitches and three innings in his most recent simulated game last weekend.

ON DECK

vs. Dodgers

Friday, 7:05 p.m., YES, WFAN (660 AM, 101.9 FM)

RHP Gerrit Cole

2026 stats:
3-4, 4.04 ERA

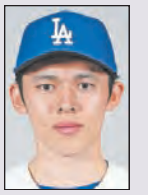
Career vs. LAD:
4-2, 5.01 ERA

Last start:
July 8 at TB;
6.1 IP, 7 H, 3 ER

PITCH BREAKDOWN

45%	19%	15%
4-Seamer	Slider	Changeup

RHP Roki Sasaki



2026 stats:
3-5, 5.33 ERA

Career vs. NYY:
First start

Last start:
July 8 vs COL;
6 IP, 4 H, 3 ER

PITCH BREAKDOWN

43%	25%	21%
4-Seamer	Split	Slider

UP NEXT

SATURDAY: vs. Dodgers, 8:08 p.m., Fox, WFAN
LHP Ryan Weathers vs. RHP Emmet Sheehan

SUNDAY: vs. Dodgers, 7:20 p.m., NBC/Peacock, WFAN
RHP Cam Schlittler vs. RHP Yoshinobu Yamamoto

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Prime

STREAM IT OR SKIP IT

"Murder 101" (Prime Video) is a fascinating look at how a sociology teacher gets his class to learn via one of the most interesting projects we've ever seen a class take on. **OUR CALL: STREAM IT**

WHAT TO WATCH

Netflix's new adaptation of **"Little House on the Prairie"** manages to capture the wonder of Laura Ingalls Wilder's books for a new generation. The series balances the sweet family drama of the books with the stark reality of what historically happened when Laura Ingalls and her family attempted to live their dreams in a little house on the prairie.

For more on your favorite TV and films, visit decider.com

DECIDER

WHAT TO WATCH. WHEREVER YOU WATCH

BRAVO BOND

'In the City' star Whitney Fransway says Page DeSorbo reached out to offer her support

By KAREN KEMMERLE

Whitney Fransway is no stranger to reality TV. Even though she's done stints on **"The Bachelor"** Season 21 and **"Bachelor in Paradise"** Season 6, Fransway knew **"In The City"** would be a whole new experience. "I did feel more nervous starting "In The City" than "The Bachelor" just because Bravo is known to love the drama," she said.

So, Fransway wasn't entirely surprised when her romance with Kenny Martin became the topic of discussion among her new friend group. Though, she "didn't think [their] relationship would be under such a microscope." " I know I moved across the country for him without a ring, but it's pretty normal to live with someone before you get engaged," said Fransway.

While Fransway spent most of her inaugural Bravo season defending her relationship with Martin, she did get herself into a bit of a mess with Lindsay Hubbard during the cast trip to Connecticut. After Hubbard refused to give up the primary suite to Yvonne Najor after her behavior at Najor's wedding dinner, Fransway remarked that Hubbard played the "single mom card" in order to not give up her room. Fransway maintains that there was "no malicious intention" with her comment. "It was the example I used when I felt like she should have put herself and her needs aside for her friendship with Yvonne."

Whitney Fransway (above) and Kenny Martin (left) star on Bravo's "In the City."

Brian Zak/Page Six

Unfortunately for Fransway, Hubbard did not take it that way. Even though the two reached an understanding in this week's season finale, Hubbard clearly was still bothered by Fransway's words when they filmed the "In The City" reunion. "I was shocked," said Fransway. "People saw that I was very clear with what my intent was. She took it down a whole different lane that it wasn't even about."

DECIDER: You are not the first "Bachelor" Nation alum to cross over to Bravo. Did you reach out to or hear from Jasmine Goode, Salley Carson, or Ashley Iaconetti before starting filming?

WHITNEY FRANSWAY: I actually just met Salley. Jasmine was on my season of "The Bachelor" so I had talked to her just briefly, I talked to Ashley more recently. She was in a similar situation as me, as she also entered into a new friend group. It was nice to connect with her and relate on that level.

The girls have a lot of concerns about yours and Kenny's relationship. Did you ever imagine you two would be a focal point of group conversation?

I didn't think our relationship would be under such a microscope. I know I moved across the country for him without a ring, but it's pretty normal to live with someone before you get engaged.

I agree. How did you and Kenny handle all the chatter surrounding your relationship?

We just made sure to communicate. We knew we had to be a united front with people questioning this and that. We knew where we stood with each other, which was the most important thing. Other people's opinions don't really matter when they're not asked for.

I know you've done a "Women Tell All" before for "The Bachelor," but what was your experience like at your first "In The City" reunion?

It was terrifying [laughs]. It was a lot more intense than I thought. I felt like I knew what I was walking into with the "Women Tell All." I was definitely a little more naive with my first "In The City" reunion. I thought we were going to address things there and move forward. I didn't expect, you know, screaming matches. [Laughs]. But I should have expected it. It's Bravo.

And you're now a part of the Bravo family forever! Outside of your own cast, who has reached out to you and made you feel the most welcomed?

Surprisingly, Paige DeSorbo reached out to me. She sent me a really sweet message last week, just saying that she's here if I need any advice. She knows this experience can be a lot. It was nice to feel the support from her.

HBO

TRENDING NOW

Gabriel Luna (left) is taking on a *killer* new guest-star role. The **"Last of Us"** star has joined the cast of **"Dexter: Resurrection"** Season 2 as Ray Ballard, a serial killer who goes by the alias "The Sleepy-Eyed Stranger."

WHAT'S NEW

ON HULU

"**They Fight**," starring **André Holland** and **Wendell Pierce** (left).

ON NETFLIX

"Heartstopper Forever," the finale film.

Best Bets

What's on Tonight

ADVENTURE

The Lion King: 3 p.m. on FREFRM. Donald Glover, James Earl Jones. Simba and his father are targeted by his bitter uncle, who wants to be King himself.

COMEDY

Men in Black: 4 p.m. on SYFY. Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones.Two agents must recover an item that has been stolen by an intergalactic villain.

ACTION

Rush Hour 2: 8 p.m. on TBS. Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker. Carter and Lee head to Hong Kong for a vacation, but become embroiled in a counterfeit money scam.

Friday July 17, 2026

SP = Spectrum, C = Cablevision, F = FiOS Movies 🟥 Sports 🟩 New 🟨

Evening	SP	C	F	6:30pm	7:00pm	7:30pm	8:00pm	8:30pm	9:00pm	9:30pm	10:00pm	10:30pm	11:00pm	11:30pm
2 WCBS	2	2	2	CBS Evening News	Inside Edition	Entertainment Tonight	Sheriff Country: Mexico (R)		Fire Country: On the Carpet (R)		Boston Blue: Hard Truths (R)		CBS News 11pm	(11:35) Comics (R)
4 WNBC	4	4	4	NBC Nightly News	(7:15) New York Live	Access Hollywood	America's Got Talent: Auditions 6: Dancing dads, a death-defying aerialist and a series of original songs.				Dateline NBC		News 4 New York at 11	(11:35) Tonight Show
5 WNYW	5	5	5	Politics Unusual	Extra	TMZ	MLS Soccer: Atlanta United FC at Nashville SC from GEODIS Park. Live.					MLS Soccer: Los Angeles FC at Los Angeles Galaxy. Live.		
7 WABC	7	7	7	ABC World News	Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune (R)	Celebrity Jeopardy! All Stars: QUARTERFINAL #4		20/20: Investigative journalists report on various news stories from around the world.				News	(11:35) Kimmel Live (R)
9 WWOR	9	9	9	Family Feud (R)	Family Feud (R)	Family Feud (R)	The News on My 9	Politics Unusual	Chicago Fire: Your Day Is Coming		The 10 O'Clock News	Family Feud (R)	Chicago Fire: I Walk Away	
11 WPIX	11	11	11	(6:00) PIX11 News at 6	Seinfeld: The Gymnast	The Big Bang Theory	Best Romcoms Ever!				PIX11 News at Ten		New York Nightcap	Seinfeld: The Pen
13 WNET	13	13	13	BBC News America	The PBS News Hour		Washington Week	Firing Line	American Experience: JFK, Part 2 (R)				Amanpour and Company	
21 WLIW	21	21	21	(6:00) News	Inspector George Gently			The Brokenwood Mysteries			(10:05) Astrid: Madman's		BBC News	The Day
25 WNYE	25	22	25	The Civil	Made In New York Talks			Papa Ray's	Inside Pow	Artists Den Reprise		Short Film	NYU Journ	Cinema
31 WPXN	31	3	531	S.W.A.T.	Pregame	WNBA Basketball: Seattle Storm at Indiana Fever.				Game Break	WNBA Basketball Live.			
41 WXTV	41	6	41	N Univisi	La rosa de Guadalupe		Tan Cerca de Ti, Nace el		Guardián de mi Vida		Corazon de Oro		Noticias	N Univisio
47 WNJU	47	16	12	Noticias	Operación Triunfo				El Señor de los Cielos		Lejos de Ti: Una solución		Noticiero	Noticias
55 WLNY	55	10	10	Perfect (R)	Last Man	Last Man	News 8pm		48 Hours: The COVID		Judge Judy	Judge Judy	Neighbor.	Neighbor.
A&E	46	46	181	(6:00) Peterson The New Evidence (R)			Scott Peterson: The New Evidence				(10:01) Scott Peterson: The New Evidence (R)			
AMC	54	43	231	(4:30) Troy (2004, Action) Brad Pitt. R ★★★			Saving Private Ryan (1998, Drama) Tom Hanks. R ★★★★							
BBCAM	71	101	189	Law & Ordr	Law & Order: Ramparts		Law & Order: Hunters		Law & Order: Haven		Law & Order: Sideshow		Law & Order: Disciple	
BET	37	54	270	(6:28) Tyler Perry's Madea's Big Happy Family (2011, Comedy) ★½					Just Wright (2010, Comedy) Queen Latifah. PG ★★					
BRAVO	18	44	185	McBee (R)	Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (2018, Adventure) Chris Pratt. PG-13 ★★★						Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle (2017) PG-13 ★★★			
CNBC	15	24	102	Money	Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank	
CNN	78	25	100	(6:00) Lead	Erin Burnett OutFront		Anderson Cooper 360°		The Source with Kaitlan		CNN NewsNight		Laura Coates Live	
COMEDY	45	50	190	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	South Park	South Park
DISC	66	27	120	Dead Catch	Deadliest Catch (R)		Deadliest Catch		(9:08) Eye of Storm (R)		(10:08) Eye of Storm (R)		(11:08) Eye of Storm (R)	
DISNEY	49	31	250	Descendants: The Rise of Red (2024) G			Descendants: Wicked Wonderland			Big City	Big City	Big City	Miraculous	Miraculous
E!	24	51	196	Men (R)	Men (R)	Men (R)	Men (R)	Men: Pilot	Men (R)	Men (R)	Catch Me If You Can (2002) Leonardo DiCaprio. ★★★½			
ESPN	28	36	70	Sports	NBA Summer League Basketball: Teams TBA Live.				NBA Summer League Basketball: Teams TBA Live.				NBA Summer Live.	
ESPN2	29	35	74	Interruption	International D		Athletes Unlimited Softball: Volts vs. Cascade Live.				Cornhole League Replay.		Cornhole League Replay.	
FBN	43	106	117	Bottom	Wall Street	Roundtable	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops
FNC	44	26	118	Spc. Rpt.	The Ingraham Angle		Jesse Watters Primetime		Hannity		Gutfeld!		Fox News @ Night	
FOOD	50	97	164	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Barks	Fiery Fails	Diners	Diners	Diners
FREE	38	49	199	(5:40) Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) PG			(8:20) Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984, Adventure) Harrison Ford.						The 700 Club (R)	
FS1	400	99	83	2026 FIFA World Cup: Teams TBA			Horse Racing Live.			High Limit Racing Series: Eldora Speedway Replay.				TMZ Sports
FX	10	40	53	World End	Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides (2011, Adventure) Johnny Depp. ★★★						Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales			
HALL		191	240	A Royal Montana Christmas (2025)			One Royal Holiday (2020, Romance) Laura Osnes.				A Royal Queens Christmas (2021) Megan Park.			
HGTV	64	98	165	My Lottery	My Lottery	My Lottery	My Lottery	My Lottery	My Lottery	Zillow Wild	Hunters	Hunters	Hunters	Hunters
HIST	40	47	128	UnXplained	The UnXplained (R)		The UnXplained (R)		The UnXplained		(10:03) Mysteries		Mysteries: Ancient Civ (R)	
ID	23	171	123	The Inside	Calls From the Inside		Detective with Lt. Kenda		Detective with Lt. Kenda		Detective with Lt. Kenda		Detective with Lt. Kenda	
LIFE	62	45	140	(6:00) NCIS	NCIS: Brothers in Arms		NCIS: In the Dark		NCIS: Trojan Horse		NCIS: Angel of Death		NCIS: Bury Your Dead	
MeTV	33	33	3	M*A*S*H	M*A*S*H	M*A*S*H	Andy	Andy	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Golden	Golden	Burnett	P. Mason
MSG	27	87	78	Team Boxing League: San Antonio Snipers at Philadelphia Smoke					The Coaches Corner		Team Boxing: Nashville Smash at Houston Hitmen			
MSG Plus	48	88	80	INTENNSE	INTENNSE Tennis: Inferno vs Fortune Live.				PokerGo High Stakes		PokerGo High Stakes		INTENNSE Tennis	
MSNOW	14	23	103	Ari Melber	The Weeknight		All in with Chris Hayes		The Briefing Jen Psaki		Lawrence O'Donnell		The 11th Hour with Ali	
MTV	20	53	210	Bang	Dirty Grandpa (2016, Comedy) Robert De Niro. R ★★½				(9:15) Ricky Stanicky (2024, Comedy) Zac Efron, John Cena.					Grandpa R
NATGEO	65	162	121	Jaws Boats	Counting Jaws (R)		Croc That Ate (R)		Jaws @ 50: The Definitive Inside Story (2025) NR				Shark Beach (R)	
NICK	6	121	252	TMNT	The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie (2004) PG ★★★				Friends	Friends	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang
OWN	173	180	145	(6:00) Belle	Belle Collective		Belle Collective		Heart & Hustle: Houston		Heart & Hustle: Houston		Belle Collective	
PARMT	36	56	54	(6:00) Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007, Fantasy)					Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (2009, Fantasy) Daniel Radcliffe. PG ★★★					
SNY	26	60	77	Minor League Baseball: Buffalo Bisons at Syracuse Mets. Live.						Yearbook	Specials	Yearbook	Sports	Sports
SYFY	17	48	180	(6:00) The Da Vinci Code (2006, Mystery) Tom Hanks. PG-13 ★★★					Angels & Demons (2009, Thriller) Tom Hanks. PG-13 ★★★					
TBS	8	39	52	Bang	Bang	Bang	Rush Hour 2 (2001, Action) Jackie Chan. PG-13 ★★★				(9:53) Rush Hour 3 (2007, Comedy) Chris Tucker. ★★½			
TCM	82	41	230	Room for One More (1952) Cary Grant.			The Asphalt Jungle (1950, Crime) Sterling Hayden.				In a Lonely Place (1950, Mystery) Humphrey Bogart.			
TLC	52	28	139	90 Day (R)	90 Day Fiancé (R)		90 Day Fiancé: More to Love: Questioning (R)				90 Day	90 Day: Last (R)		90 Day (R)
TNT	3	37	51	Secret Service (2015) R		O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000, Comedy) George Clooney. ★★★½					Mile 22 (2018, Action) Mark Wahlberg. R ★★½			
TVLAND	85	34	241	Andy	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	(9:20) Loves Raymond		Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Queens	Queens
USA	16	38	50	Everything	Everything	Everything	WWE Friday Night Live.				Everything	Everything	Men	Men
VH1	19	52	217	Wife/Kids	Wife/Kids	Wife/Kids	Do the Right Thing (1989, Drama) Danny Aiello. R ★★★½						My Cousin Vinny (1992) R	
WE	59	42	149	(6:00) American Pie (1999, Comedy) R			Love After Lockup: Skating Around			This is Poly: Love Bombs		Love After Lockup: Skating Around		
YES	53	89	76	Pregame	MLB Baseball: Los Angeles Dodgers at New York Yankees. Live.						Postgame	Postgame	Home Plate	Sportico
HBO	511	301	400	Man Burn	(7:05) Ocean's 8 (2018, Action) Sandra Bullock. ★★½				Life, Larry	Life Larry	House of the Dragon: Tumbleton (R)			Life Larry
MAX	531	371	420	(6:32) Beetlejuice Beetlejuice (2024, Comedy) Michael Keaton, Winona Ryder. PG-13							(10:18) Trance (2013, Thriller) James McAvoy. R ★★★			
MGM Plus	595		395	(5:40) Shutter Island (2010, Thriller) R			Is God Is (2026) Sterling K. Brown. R			(9:40) The Silence of the Lambs (1991, Thriller) ★★★★				Is God Is R
PARSHO	551	321	365	(6:00) Kiss the Girls (1997, Thriller) ★★★			The Chi: Cold Hearted		Good Boys (2019) Jacob Tremblay. R			(10:35) Daddy's Home (2015, Comedy)		

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COME SALE AWAY

Heyman: Mets listening on nearly everyone as they open for business

Corey Sipkin; Getty Images; Imagn Images

The Mets are ready to make trades — and virtually no one is untouchable, even Francisco Lindor. The star shortstop is unlikely to go, but the Mets are likely to deal Freddy Peralta (top) and would part with Bo Bichette (right). Only Juan Soto and a handful of youngsters are off-limits. **PAGE 63**

SMOKE SHOW

METS BLAST WAY TO VICTORY IN HAZY PHILLY

PAGES 62

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